Tennis French Open

Seles banishes Hamburg ghost

Stephen Bierley

THERE was an understandable element of torment about Monica Seles's match with Magdalena Maleeva in Paris on Sunday, although in the end it was perhaps a kind of release.

The two players had last met on a singles court in 1993, the April day in Hamburg when Gunter Parche stabbed Seles in the back while she was changing ends.

Coming face to face at Roland Garros inevitably stirred memories of that dreadful incident, with Seles *admitting that sitting down with her* back to the mass ranks of spectators on the Court Centrale, and with Maleeva at her side again, had been "really tough".

All the show courts throughout the world hire minders now, and not just for Seles. The stabbing changed everyone's perceptions of safety and security.

"I said to myself, 'Just keep going and not think about it'," said Seles after her 6-1, 6-1 win over the Bulgarian. "I told myself it's just another tennis match."

Maleeva, the No 13 seed, was asked if the memories of the incident had any effect on her. "No, that didn't bother me at all," she said, adding, with the broadest of smiles, "Neither did it bother her."

Not, certainly, in terms of the way Seles played. There was power in her serve and she snapped into her ground shots without inhibition. A daily routine of ice and heat treatment, combined with stretching and massage, appears to be having a highly beneficial effect on her shoulder injury. More than anything else her confidence has been restored.

Those who know Seles well confirmed that her timing was indeed back. This has nothing to do with her hitting of the little yellow balls, but her ability to start answering questions virtually before the questioner has finished. "Oh boy," she says, and is off and running on any subject, including her ambitions outside tennis — which, incidentally, include sky-diving.

She will next meet Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic in the quarter-finals, Novotna having beaten the Romanian Irina Spirlea 6-1, 7-5.

Steffi Graf, seeded and ranked joint No 1 with Seles, had rattled off 14 straight wins over Mary Joe Fernandez of the United States, so that to find her 4-0 down in the second-set tie-break was, to say the least, a touch surprising.

Normal service was quickly resumed, Graf winning this rain-interrupted match 6-1, 7-6. Her quarter-final opponent will be the 18-year-old Croatian, Iva Majoli, who beat the Spanish qualifier Gala Leon Garcia 6-3, 6-1.

In the top half of the men's draw there were routine wins for Richard Krajicek of Holland, Russia's Yevgeny Kafelnikov, Jim Courier and Pete Sampras.



Aiming high . . . Monica Seles concentrates as she serves to Magdalena Maleeva in the French Open

Kafelnikov, who beat Andre Agassi here last year, has not dropped a set so far. On Sunday he hustled away Spain's Francisco Clavet 6-4, 6-3, 6-3. He next plays Krajicek, who recently reached the final of the Italian Open.

Krajicek's victor then and the French Open defending champion, Austria's Thomas Muster, fell to Germany's Michael Stich, 4-6, 6-4, 6-1, 7-6 in the biggest upset of the second week. Muster, the world No 2, is regarded as unbeatable on his favourite clay surface.

Courier, who unlike Seles is apt to answer questions with a brevity bordering on the curt, was in sunny mood after his win over South Africa's Wayne Ferreira, notably on the subject of his cap — sometimes worn, sometimes not.

Of marginally more interest is whether Sampras will kill Courier in the quarter-finals. Courier has won the French Open twice, in 1991 and 1992, and beat Sampras at the quarter-final stage two year ago, ending his fellow American's hopes of four consecutive Grand Slam titles. After two energy-sapping five-set matches Sampras had the luxury of a relatively soft 6-4, 7-5, 6-2 win over Australia's Scott Draper.

Unseeded Bernd Karbacher of Germany upset Goran Ivanisevic in straight sets to reach the last eight. Karbacher fired his 14th ace on a match point to win 6-3, 6-1, 6-2 in an hour and 20 minutes as the hard-hitting Croat appeared to struggle with blisters on his feet.

Last Saturday will be remembered for Stefan Edberg's wonderful victory over the No 4 seed Michael Chang. A combination of brilliant play and Chang's long-term rib injury saw the 30-year-old Edberg soft-shoe shuffle his elegant way to a stunning 4-6, 7-5, 6-0, 7-6 victory. But the dream came to an end on Monday when Edberg bowed out in straight sets to Marc Rosset in his last appearance at Roland Garros.

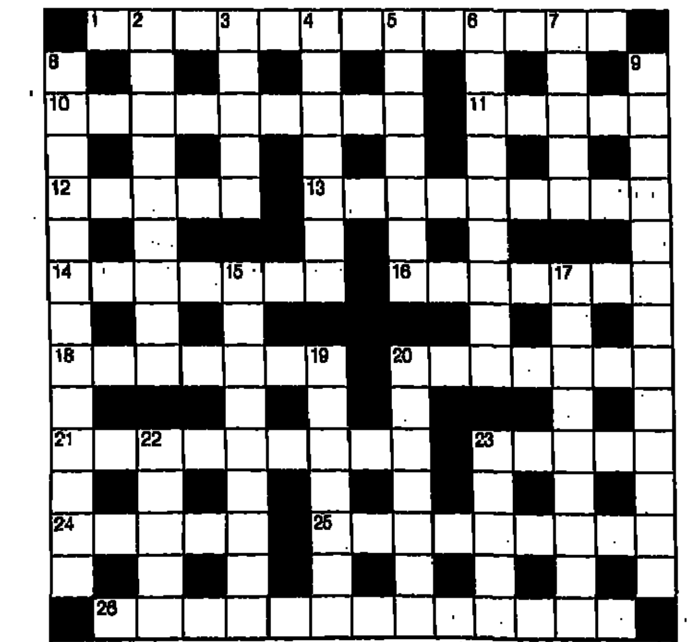
Earlier, American star Andre Agassi fumbled his way to defeat. He had arrived here with virtually no preparation, played poorly but scraped through. Then, in the second round, Chris Woodruff, a little-known 23-year-old from Knoxville, Tennessee, knocked him out, winning 4-6, 6-4, 6-7, 6-3, 6-2.

British interest in the competition ended when Greg Rusedski lost to Stich. Rusedski had ample opportunities in the second set to stretch the German, but every time a chance arose it was Stich who walloped home the telling service or ground stroke, and Britain's adopted Canadian lost the second-round encounter 6-3, 7-5, 6-3.

Mary Pierce, the darling of French tennis, went out in the third round to Barbara Rittner of Germany 6-4, 6-2 after compiling a catalogue of banal errors.

Martina Hingis, who in the Italian Open recently defeated Graf, was knocked out by Karina Hadsudova of Slovakia 4-6, 7-5, 6-4. The 15-year-old Swiss girl was the No 15 seed.

Cryptic crossword by Araucaria



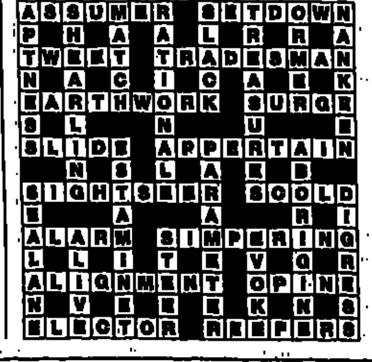
Across

1 Cup diner smashed where he dined, acting on impulse (13)
10 Swing to left, Alice's doing (9)
11 What a Friend and the Earth do? (5)
12 Sort of eyes on a string? (5)
13 Long way back home for social worker is cathartic (9)
14 Green not all that close? (7)
16 Setter subject to frontal (7)
18 No earner, he could be interred not having died (7)
20 Cricket manager's manner reversed, about ancient Split? (7)
21 Tiny part for cricketer, spiny fish for child (9)
23 Miserable of old in the shadow of Ulster (5)
24 Order him to leave the fruit (5)
25 Legendary skill shown by Ben Hur's father's first article (9)
26 Latvian communist turned sea dry on special occasions (3-6,4)

Down

2 Connivance with wrong on Titanic (9)
3 Meeting of the faithful, generally without transmission (5)
4 Hangings go through in the back yard (7)
5 White metal: use mica if worried (7)
6 Ends off guilty — QC at a perverse verdict (9)
7 A shopping area turns up: I'll carry your bags (5)
8 Comment on belatedness of better one — I'm sorry (3,6,4)
9 Slip road to market (9,4)
15 Revolutionary process proved hollow — R.I.P. (9)
17 Fliers and swimmer put in money tainted with oil (9)
19,20,23 Polish sailor at home with child: he tightened the spring to make things worse (3,4,4,3,5)
22 Tightened, which may be perfect (5)
23 See 19

Last week's solution



Golf Deutsche Bank Open

Nobilo piles on the agony

Michael Britten in Hamburg

FOR the third time in under three months Colin Montgomerie has had an important title whisked from his grasp in the final stages by an inspired opponent.

In March it was Fred Couples with an eagle at the 16th in a last-round 64 to deprive him of the Players Championship at Sawgrass. Last month it was Stephen Ames after Montgomerie led by three strokes going into the final round of the Benson & Hedges International.

On Sunday, Frank Nobilo deprived the European No 1 of the Deutsche Bank Open at the Gut Kaden Club. The New Zealander, who covered the first nine holes in 30, added a birdie hat-trick from the 15th for a best-of-the-week 64 to equal the tournament record of 270. Montgomerie had a 66, but despite a birdie at the 18th was beaten by one shot.

Nobilo was one behind the Scot at the outset but he birdied the 1st and followed an eagle from 30 feet at the 3rd with three more birdies.

It took an equally emphatic broadside of attacking iron shots and accurate putting for Montgomerie to stay in touch with an outward 32 that contained four birdies. A fifth at the 10th put him into the lead when Nobilo drove into a bunker at the 12th, but at the short 14th Montgomerie tried to force his four-iron tee shot and pushed it wide of the green on to a grassy bank, where he found a poor lie.

Almost simultaneously Nobilo followed a birdie four at the 15th with a 6ft putt for a two at the 16th to effect a two-stroke swing. When Nobilo also beat par at the 17th, despite hitting two woods into a greenside bunker, Montgomerie had to birdie the last two holes to force a tie.

In Dubai in March he had struck a 230-yard driver shot over the lake at the 18th to win the Desert Classic. This time his attempt with the same club to hit the green at the 564-yard 17th was well off target as the ball ballooned into the semi-rough, and he could manage only par. With Nobilo watching in the enthralled gallery, Montgomerie's brave attempt to sink an eight-iron from 172 yards at the last for an eagle two ended eight feet short. It was the fifth European victory for the 36-year-old, who won £120,830.

"There always seems to be someone around to do these things to me," said Montgomerie. "It's unfortunate to shoot 66 and not win, but I am happy with my game coming up to the US Open."

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The Washington Post — Le Monde

Europe confronts Major in beef war

Guardian Reporters

GERMANY dramatically raised the stakes in the beef war this week when it unilaterally declared it would continue *the ban on beef derivatives which* the European Commission had agreed to lift after sustained pressure from the British government.

Germany's defiance came as its other European Union partners hardened their attitude to Britain's campaign of obstruction and veto, uniting in an unprecedented chorus of condemnation for the British attempt to paralyse the working of the union.

At a stormy meeting of EU foreign ministers in Luxembourg on Monday, Malcolm Rifkind, the UK foreign secretary, met a barrage of unbridled hostility from his 14 European counterparts, several of whom accused Britain of attempted blackmail.

The German government's announcement signalled its resolve to stand firm in the beef war with the British. After meeting the agriculture ministers of Germany's 16 federal states, Horst Seehofer, the *health minister, said all ministers* had pledged to maintain the imports ban against British beef products.

The Commission voted last week partially to lift the blocks on bull semen, tallow and gelatine. Germany's two commissioners in Brussels have come under sharp criticism at home for agreeing to loosen the curbs. Even before the beef war erupted in March, several German states had slapped unilateral import bans on British beef, embroiling them in legal tussles with Brussels.

UK ministers, fearful of the repercussions within the party which would follow a failure to secure a binding agreement at the Florence summit on June 21, now appear ready to settle for what other EU governments see as little more than a figleaf declaration on the beef ban.

The Italian European Union Presidency warned that it was "unrealistic" to expect full agreement at Florence on a stage-by-stage lifting of the ban. But Lamberto Dini, the Italian foreign minister, made it clear that even this will be conditional on John Major at least suspending Britain's veto campaign.

In an exclusive interview aimed at a British audience last weekend, Jacques Santer, President of the European Commission, said Europeans were beginning to question Britain's EU membership, warning that "the hour of truth" was approaching.

In a bitter attack on the British government for its "irresponsible" handling of the beef crisis, he accused British ministers of "absurd" behaviour which would leave Britain diplomatically isolated for years.

Mr Santer's anger will heighten the sense of Westminster crisis and stiffen the resolve of Mr Major's critics to ensure that he does not even dream of a "beef war" retreat.

Mr Santer warned: "There is a *very broad reaction against the* British attitude and, as they call it in some newspapers, British arrogance. That is very damaging for British interests.

"You are right in asking whether some people are suggesting that Europe would be better off without Britain. I would do my best to fight any reaction of this kind. I do not think any government shares this view at present." But there was an implicit threat that the situation could change.

Mr Santer said: "We are coming to *l'heure de vérité*. We are going as far as the limit of our possible tolerance, and all the members' tolerance."

Mr Santer, who has advised the UK government to end its non-co-operation policy within the EU, has generally been seen as a friend of Britain, and the Commission has tried hard to reach a solution to the crisis, but there is extreme scepticism about whether a framework agreement for lifting the beef ban can be put in place by the time of the forthcoming summit.

The Tories' bitterness over the beef ban and the requirement to slaughter more than a million cattle by the end of this year threaten to increase support for the Eurosceptic cause. The test of that was due to come in the Commons on Tuesday, when MPs had the chance of delivering a public vote on a European referendum.

Fishing row, page 10
Comment, page 12

Austria	AS30	Malta	45c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 400	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30



Sitting tight . . . Democratic Unionists at Stormont on Monday, from left to right, Peter Robinson MP, Gregory Campbell, Ian Paisley, Nigel Dodds and William McCrea MP PHOTOGRAPH: BRIAN LITTLE

Irish talks stumble at twin hurdles

David Sharrock

THE first day of Northern Ireland's multi-party talks lived up to all its expectations: drama, pathos, courageous words, cups of tea, hope, sanctimony, and *plain* bloody-mindedness. *All of life* was here, even if not all in the same room at the same time.

There were chaotic scenes at the Castle Buildings venue at Stormont in east Belfast as the talks got under way, 21 months after the IRA called a ceasefire and four months since it was ended with the bombing of Canary Wharf, east London. A 32-year-old man was charged with the bombing this week.

Monday's highlight was not a lockout — as Sinn Fein had hoped — but the absence of a walkout by any of the unionists, despite threats over their unhappiness with the agenda and the chairman, George Mitchell, President Clinton's close ally. Mr Mitchell was forced to spend the day in a side room while participants wrangled over his role.

The atmosphere in the Belfast negotiating chamber during the opening speeches by the British and Irish prime ministers was "highly charged", those present said.

John Major encapsulated the spirit of the moment when he opened proceedings with a warning about the consequences of failure. "For too long the history of Northern Ireland has poisoned the present and threatened the future. It is time to end all that, however difficult it may be. History has involved too many victims," he said. "Too much blood has been spilt."

John Bruton also lived up to the sense of occasion, giving a sensitive performance on hostile territory in which he stressed how Irish nationalism had undertaken a period of reflection and redefinition. He had just come from the funeral of a Garda detective, who police believe was shot dead by the IRA last week, a man "mercilessly cut down in the prime of life". The challenge that lay ahead was to "overcome the legacy of history".

"Constitutional nationalists, North and South, now accord full recognition not only to unionists' distinct ethos and cultural identity, but to the centrality of their British allegiance in their identity," he told the delegates in the chamber, where only Sinn Fein's two empty seats jarred the symmetry of the table.

His speech led to a remarkable first: the hardline Democratic *Unionist leader, Ian Paisley,* sat through the entire speech of an Irish prime minister delivered on Ulster soil without walking out or bellowing at him. Even if they would not admit it, the unionists must have liked much of Mr Bruton's speech.

The two prime ministers were at one that Sinn Fein would only be allowed inside once the IRA has unequivocally restored its ceasefire. "The campaigning demand of the republican movement has been 'peace talks now'," said Mr Bruton. "Today is now."

But Sinn Fein didn't see it, or play it, like that outside. "We come as peace-builders," declared the Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams. Eventually, after several hours spent wrangling at the gates, they left to return to west Belfast.

Martin Kettle, page 13

Nigerian chief's wife killed in car attack

David Pallister

THE wife of Chief Moshood Abiola, the imprisoned Nigerian politician, died from gunshot wounds last week after her car was attacked on a main road in Lagos, the country's commercial capital.

Kudirat Abiola, aged 44, was an outspoken critic of the military regime which imprisoned her husband two years ago after he declared himself the winner of the 1993 presidential elections.

The attack happened as she and her driver were travelling on the Ibadan expressway, about three miles from her home in the northern suburb of Ikeja. The gunmen, in a Peugeot 505, opened fire with automatic weapons.

Both Mrs Abiola and the driver were hit and were taken to the nearby Eko Hospital. Dr Alex Eneli, one of the owners of the hospital, said doctors had immediately operated on her head wound. "She didn't make it," he said. "It was a bad sight. The bullet was at close range."

Although police described the gunmen as hoodlums, there was immediate speculation in Lagos that the attack was an assassination. Suspicions that successive military regimes have resorted to assassination have never been dispelled since the newspaper editor Dele Giwa was blown up in 1986.

Chief Abiola, a millionaire businessman, was the clear winner of the presidential contest which was annulled by the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida before he could assume power.

Chief Abiola declared himself president in 1994. He was arrested and charged with treason. His trial has been repeatedly postponed after legal wrangles about the jurisdiction of the court in the capital Abuja and which judge should hear it. He is kept in virtual solitary confinement in one room of a guest house in the city.

Straw's hardline quest to gain street credibility

YOUR excellent leader (Labour's curfew on common sense, June 9) expresses exactly how I feel about Jack Straw's obscene and repulsive attack upon young people, and upon the civil liberties of us all. I joined the Labour party a year ago because I wanted an end to Conservative rule. Now I find that Labour is not merely aping Conservatism, but on occasion is flirting with far-right authoritarianism. Straw's latest outburst has convinced me that we have little to gain from the election of a Labour government.
(Dr) Richard Dunphy,
University of Dundee, Dundee

JACK STRAW is the last straw. New Labour wants to lock up the young at night. In practice this means locking up working-class children: the children of the affluent will be ferried back and forth by their parents or given money for taxis; the children of the poor will have to stay home or face punishment. The ethos of imprisoning people in their own homes before they commit crimes is not one we would have associated with the Labour party, or indeed with any party in a democracy. In their eagerness to poach votes from the right, Labour has effectively disenfranchised the left.
L and T Abramsky,
London

I READ that Jack Straw wants curfews on young British people. Who is he to dictate when my children should be allowed out on to streets which I pay taxes to help maintain? I thought that Labour believed in parental responsibility and individual freedom, not state control of the family. I want my children to be able to walk our streets in safety, not be locked away at home watching television. We have a right to demand a better life for young people, not a more restricted one. To create a safe environment for all of us requires sensible, creative and progressive policies. Straw provides only soundbite hysteria.
Don Quinn,
Colchester, Essex

YOUR leader on the proposal to give local authorities, in agreement with the police and local residents, a power to make sure that children aged 10 and under are not left unsupervised on the streets late at night was as hysterical as it was confusing.

Is the Guardian seriously arguing that it is appropriate for such children to be out alone late at night? That can be the only conclusion from the absurd claim that our proposal would penalise "large numbers of innocent young people".

Furthermore, your paradoxical claim that the problem is "largely non-existent" will have been read by incredulity by those who grapple daily with the problems facing young children in many parts of Britain.

Of course, some of the young children out on the streets late at night face family problems in their homes. But how on earth does the Guardian's solution — that is, doing nothing — solve this?

If our proposal was accepted, it would be for the local communities, through councils and the local police, to trigger action. Far from an indiscriminate national imposition, our approach would empower communities, while identifying children who are at risk much earlier.

The process by which councils and the police would have to engage in public debate before they could use these powers should lead to better local agreement — and natural enforcement — of standards of behaviour which are in everyone's interests, especially those of parents and children.
Jack Straw MP,
Shadow Home Secretary, House of Commons, London

Being rational about refugees

MANY thanks to Martin Woollacott for his thoughtful and balanced treatment of the refugee crisis (West makes drama out of refugee crisis, May 26). Woollacott has carefully followed debate and policies in this area for many years, and he detects the doubletalk and hypocrisy of governments. It is important to realise that this problem is not going to go away. It is perhaps on its way to becoming the central international problem of our times, one that governments cannot sweep under the carpet of deterrent legislation.
Brian Patrick McGuire,
National Association of Danish Refugee Friends, Copenhagen, Denmark

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IN THE final sentence of his article Martin Woollacott writes: "The choice is . . . between a rational policy of prevention and management . . . and allowing ourselves to keep repeating the self-defeating pattern of alternating engagement and disengagement with the crises . . ."

The conflict that I infer from Woollacott's suggestion and my interpretation of "enlightened" Western opinion is this: who are Westerners to tell members of the Liberian state, for example, how to solve their problems? Why is Western "prevention and management" appropriate in Rwanda but inappropriate when the US interferes in the Unionist/IRA conflict? When do my "national interests" (read "commercial interests") override your right for freedom from foreign intervention? When does "prevention and management" become neo-colonialism?
Philip C Freund,
Lee, Massachusetts, USA

Blame for abuse of women

IN HIS article (African Women Fight Abuse, May 12), Stephen Buckley writes from Nairobi about the establishment of a home for battered women there. He notes that "spousal abuse" is, "among sub-Saharan Africa's best known and least-discussed secrets, a problem far more pervasive but much less addressed than other social ills, such as Aids".

I would certainly not wish to deny the existence of wife battering in the region, or minimise its extent or severity, but I wish to make a number of points.

There is a clear implication in the article that wife-battering in sub-Saharan Africa is uniquely culturally embedded and that the most powerful force shaping this phenomenon "is the African notion that the family is a bastion of privacy, in which unpleasant matters especially must be shielded from public scrutiny". Buckley's suggestion that this cultural stance, in combination with the economic dependence of women upon men, cynical police officers and judges and the negative reactions of other women, has rendered battered wives unable to escape constant abuse, left me with an unpleasant sensation of *déjà vu.*

Far from being a "not-so-hidden shame" unique to sub-Saharan Africa, it is barely two decades since virtually the same explanations were offered in the UK for the existence of wife-battering and the powerlessness of women unable to escape from abusive relationships.

Buckley's analysis attempts to explain away wife-battering by attributing it to notions of "rights" and "rites" held in African societies when perhaps it has more to do with the existence of universally experienced and evidenced fundamental inequalities between women and men.
Pauline M Worrall,
Rundu, Namibia

Zapatista blow against empire

LARRY ELLIOT is right in saying that an examination of the "benefits" of trade globalisation is long overdue (Putting trade in its proper place, June 2).

Two weeks ago, more than 900 delegates travelled from all round Europe to meet in Berlin in response to a communiqué issued by the Zapatistas in Mexico: "Over the ruins of an exhausted system let us construct the world anew with humanity at the centre of decision-making."

Billions struggle on the margins of those ruins. And decision-making has been hijacked by corporate culture gurus. After years of lobbying they have created a deregulated world order, protected by a legally binding international treaty, mirrored in the image of the world's biggest companies.

National parliaments become ever more marginal as key investment decisions are made by unelected chairmen of multinationals who must compete with each other or go under.

Studies carried out at the Harvard Business School suggest that in many key sectors in the North income will fall by up to 50 per cent in the generations to come as low-paid workers in Third World countries begin to integrate themselves into the global market.

Today, Pat Buchanan and Vladimir Zhirinovsky appear to be maverick extremists. How marginal might they be 15 years from now as even more communities are destroyed?

A truly amazing phenomenon has been the ability of corporate culture to capture our imaginations, and convince a phalanx of grey-suited politicians in every mainstream party that the "free market" is the only "efficient" manner of distributing the world's resources.

Nine hundred delegates in Berlin — totally ignored by the media — might seem a pathetically inadequate response to the corporate power that swamps our cultures. But who would have thought the biggest challenge to Nafta would have come from the most marginalised of Indians in the heart of the Mexican jungle? And who knows what progress might be made as delegates from all round the world go to Mexico in July?
Paul Laverty,
Glasgow

Briefly

YOUR REVIEW of A Glimpse Of Hell (The torturer's century, June 9), is a timely reminder of the contemporary endemic of institutionalised torture. It is also a condemnation of the role the West plays both in supporting regimes that employ such methods and in supplying them with the devices they use.
Chris Bissell,
Bedford, UK

I WAS PLEASED to read in Suzanne Goldenberg's report on the election in Kashmir (Troops force Kashmiris to ballot box, June 2) that "apart from small, scattered blasts and a few demonstrations, voting was free of violence". However, given that her report also says that the Kashmiri voters were "beaten and herded like cattle" by the Indian army to the polling stations, it has to be asked, how does Suzanne Goldenberg define violence?
David Lynch,
Munich, Germany

IT WAS gratifying to see Irian Jaya and its problems get some space in your columns in the last few issues. The so-called "Free Choice" elections of 1963 under UN auspices were neither free nor a choice, thus the continued existence of the Free Papua Movement which has been trying for more than 30 years to get independence from the Indonesian military colonialist regime.
Colin L Amery,
Auckland, New Zealand

MATTHEW DOYLE (June 2) must be confused. The letter said he is from the University of East Anglia, Norwich when it seems to me that he could be writing from any one of Australia's universities. Amanda Vanstone, the minister responsible for higher education in the conservative government, is, she tells us, simply doing her job — cuts to higher education of 5-12 per cent will be, in her view, the contribution that the sector must make to the nebulous budget deficit. Popular uprisings such as the recent one, where the universities across Australia came to a standstill, may be the only way we can tell the economic rationalists in government that education is the crux of a civil society.
Christine Spratt,
Deakin University,
Geelong, Victoria, Australia

SO-CALLED road rage does indeed need to be put into perspective, but not quite as your editorial suggests (How to curb motorists' rage, May 26). The vast majority of those killed or injured on the roads are victims of the normal, criminal negligence of motorists.
Tony Roberts,
RoadPeace, London

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A sniffer dog from the Norwegian People's Aid de-mining team helps to clear a railway tunnel near Tuzla in Bosnia to allow war crimes investigators to look for evidence of mass killings PHOTO: ODD ANDERSEN

Suu Kyi rally defies junta

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Bangkok

THOUSANDS of Burmese crowded round the home of the pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi in Rangoon, the capital, at the weekend in resolute defiance of new efforts by the military regime to bludgeon its critics into obedience.

Mounting tension stirred by a new law against any challenge to state authority, and a military warning that she should stop holding regular weekend meetings outside her home, failed to deter a crowd of about 5,000 assembling to enthusiastic cheers of "Long live democracy".

Ms Suu Kyi, speaking as usual from across her garden wall, discreetly skirted official criticism and the stream of invective poured out by the state propaganda organ, the New Light of Myanmar. But she said: "We never said a word to undermine the stability of the state."

Perhaps conscious of intense international scrutiny of events in Rangoon, Burma's ruling generals reacted cautiously. Police and troops stayed out of sight during the weekend meeting.

Despite the calm, a diplomat in Rangoon said: "If both sides mean what they say, and we have no reason to suppose they don't, they are heading on a collision course, and confrontation is inevitable."

The junta's line of attack is now focused on Ms Suu Kyi's weekly meetings with the public and the plans announced by her National League for Democracy for drawing up a draft constitution as an alternative to the charter on which a military-directed national convention has been cogitating for more than three years.

A law passed last week, targeting Ms Suu Kyi and the League, empowers the junta to ban any organisation that violates laws against illegal gatherings or any action that could "belittle and create misunderstandings among the public in connection with the national convention". The penalty for violators is up to 20 years' imprisonment and the confiscation of assets and property.

"Attempts are being made, in collusion with external cohorts, to challenge the authority of the government and jeopardise the chances for peace and progress," a New Light of Myanmar commentary said at the weekend. "If the League becomes outlawed, all its members would be sent straight to the Insein University of Life," the state-run press said, referring to the country's most notorious centre of detention and torture. This addition to the junta's dictatorial powers may also have been prompted by its failure to stop Ms Suu Kyi and the League proceeding with a congress last month that announced the plans to draft an alternative constitution. Authorities are thought to be still holding some of the 262 League activists rounded up in the middle of last month to discourage attendance.

Last week, in a further sign of pressure on its followers, the League announced that four of its members elected to parliament in the 1990 poll — won by the League and then ignored by the junta — were resigning from the party.

The ruling generals may feel constrained to bide their time in view of the international spotlight drawn by the recent threat of confrontation and the approaching anniversary of Ms Suu Kyi's release last year after six years of house arrest.

For all their public show of indifference to criticism abroad, the generals will also wish to protect relations with their neighbours in the region before next month's annual gathering of foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean). Burma will be attending for the first time as a full member.

The need for prudence has been increased by the United States' decision to send two senior diplomats to Burma. They were due in Bangkok this week at the start of a tour of southeast Asia and Japan in an attempt to co-ordinate a response to the tension bubbling up in Burma.

In a tough response to the crackdown, the Clinton Administration called on the junta last week to "cease and desist in its pressure tactics against the democrats in Burma".

The US mission will face an uphill battle with Asean governments that espouse a doctrine of "constructive engagement" with Burma and doggedly avoid comments they say might be construed as interference in its internal affairs.

However, the Japanese foreign minister, Yukihido Ikeda, has publicly backed the right to free assembly in Burma. The junta, which claims political tensions do not hurt its economic development plans, will be hoping this tacit criticism does not spell a suspension of Tokyo's aid.

Angola army aims to end UN peace role

Victoria Brittain in Luanda

THE Angolan military leadership has started to form a unified national army to bring to an end the United Nations peacekeeping process.

The move comes as the political leadership tries to shape a new government following the dismissal of the prime minister, the government and the central bank governor by President Jose Eduardo dos Santos.

Fernando Franca van Dunem, the national assembly president, was appointed prime minister to replace Marcolino Moco.

As the political crisis was erupting last week, the first 15 officers from Jonas Savimbi's Unita guerrilla army were being incorporated into the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) and the process of selecting 26,000 Unita soldiers for the army was beginning under a two-month deadline set by the FAA chief of staff, General Joao de Matos.

Gen Matos said the new army would be complete by July 30. "At that point the state administration will be restored over the whole country. We are tired of this peace process, it's been going on too long. The country is in a morass, the people are exhausted, the international community has had enough. So much money is being wasted by the UN," he said.

Within the UN there is growing concern about the credibility of its largest peacekeeping operation, costing more than $1 million a day.

At least half of the 35,000 Unita men registered in the 11 UN quartering areas are not soldiers, according to UN and aid officials. One-third of them came without weapons, according to Gen Matos. In addition, no heavy weapons of any sort have been handed in, the munitions relinquished are derisory and new arms supplies are regularly being flown in by Unita from Zaire, he said.

A UN official said: "Unita has not even begun a serious effort towards disarming and demobilising, 18 months after the Lusaka accords, and there is no sign of any change."

The mood among both UN and aid agency personnel is pessimistic, despite the robust optimism of the UN secretary-general's special representative, Aliyoun Blondin Beye. He says the problem of non-surrendered weapons will be rectified by Unita, and does not accept that there is any problem with the identities of the people already quartered.

However, General Philip Sibanda, the Zimbabwean military commander of the UN force, said: "It is clear we do not have the best troops in the quartering areas, we do not have the best weapons, we do not have ammunition or other war stores, explosives, communications equipment."

Last year's ceasefire left Unita in control of more than half the country, though some areas are barely populated. Gen Matos said the UN could not monitor what was going on in Unita areas, or where the soldiers outside the quartering areas were being kept.

Reports say Pol Pot is dead

POL POT, the ruthless guiding spirit in one of the century's most brutal regimes, is seriously ill and may already be dead according to a flurry of reports from Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh, and the Thai-Cambodian border, *writes Nick Cumming-Bruce in Bangkok*.

Pol Pot, aged 68, who came to personify a reign of terror that killed at least 1 million Cambodians and probably many more, suffered an attack of malaria and is dying, according to intelligence released last week by the Cambodian interior and defence ministries.

Although the government in Phnom Penh could not confirm reports of his death it said it would, if true, be good news for Cambodia.

The head of state, King Norodom Sihanouk, predicted that the Khmer Rouge guerrilla movement might fragment; and said: "This will then be the end of one of the most terrible tragedies of our history."

The reports, based on accounts of government agents and villagers living near Khmer Rouge strongholds along the border with Thailand, echoed those from Beijing in recent days.

The shadowy Khmer Rouge leader, who has haunted the Thai-Cambodian border for the past 18 years, has been reported dead before.

Militants strike against Israelis

Derek Brown in Jerusalem and David Hirst in Beirut

PALESTINIAN and Lebanese militants have sent a grim challenge to the Israeli prime minister-elect, Binyamin Netanyahu, with two attacks which cost at least eight lives.

Hizbullah promised on Monday to turn occupied south Lebanon into a "volcano" and "drive out the Israelis and their Lebanese auxiliaries". The boast came after a daring raid in which five Israeli soldiers were killed in a hail of machine-gun and rocket fire. Six other soldiers were wounded, and a Lebanese soldier was killed when Israeli artillery retaliated.

Inside Israel, two Jewish settlers from the occupied West Bank died when at least one gunman sprayed their car with automatic fire. The victims were a young couple from the most radical of settlements, Kiryat Arba, outside Hebron.

Their nine-month-old son was found by police, unharmed and still strapped in the back seat of the car.

For Mr Netanyahu, who won last month's election with a promise to bring Israel peace with security, the latest attacks are the starkest reminder of bloody reality.

Mr Netanyahu maintained his post-election silence, but his office issued a terse statement: "The battle must be waged aggressively with determination and prudence, and this will be our policy."

The attack in Lebanon — which has sharpened fears in the country of another conflagration if Israel hits back in the south — brings to nine the number of Israelis killed in the "security zone" since the Grapes of Wrath operation in April. Before Grapes of Wrath, seven had been killed this year.

Eleven of Israel's protégés of the South Lebanese Army have been killed so far this year. Hizbullah has lost 31 guerrillas, but only four of them since Grapes of Wrath.

In the dawn assault, Hizbullah raiders opened fire at close range on Israeli soldiers on their way to the hill-top outpost of Dabshe, and fired anti-tank missiles at two armoured personnel carriers. It was almost a repeat performance of a raid last year, in which they briefly laid siege to the Dabshe outpost. Their video film of the operation shocked the Israeli public.

Israeli troops replied with a heavy artillery bombardment of the Nabatiyah area, killing a Lebanese soldier and wounding a civilian. Hizbullah called this a violation of the "understanding" that ended Grapes of Wrath. This prohibits Israel from shelling civilians and Hizbullah from launching attacks from populated areas.

Nothing in the understandings forbids Hizbullah from raids into the "security zone". Israel and the United States have more or less admitted that since Grapes of Wrath Hizbullah attacks have kept "within the rules".

The perennial savagery of Lebanon will test Mr Netanyahu sorely after he takes office. But the new leader may well be even more concerned about the less sophisticated but more cold-blooded attack inside Israel.

Squeeze on holy city, page 5

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The Week

BILL CLINTON faced new embarrassment over the Whitewater scandal when a federal judge ordered the US president to testify at a second trial investigating the affair, and FBI agents revealed they had found Hillary Clinton's fingerprints on some previously missing documents.

DESPITE the destruction of the Ariane 5 space rocket on its first flight — it was carrying four uninsured satellites worth $750 million — French officials declared that Europe's satellite launching programme would be back on course soon.

SHAREHOLDERS in the Gdansk shipyard, where Solidarity was born in 1980, decided to close the indebted yard and start bankruptcy procedures. Solidarity union leaders vowed to fight the plans.

AT LEAST 66 people died and 162 are missing after two landslides in Yunnan, southwest China, according to the official Xinhua new agency. And a gas explosion at a mine near Pingdingshan in central China killed 75 miners.

RUSSIA delighted Nato by unexpectedly softening its opposition to the alliance's proposed enlargement into eastern Europe, until now harshly criticised by Moscow.

THE Organisation of American States has denounced the US Helms-Burton law, which punishes foreign businesses in Cuba, and voted to review whether or not it violates international trade laws.

THE International Committee of the Red Cross has suspended operations in Burundi after three Swiss staff were killed in an ambush, the worst involving foreigners during the country's civil war.

BANGLADESH goes to the polls for the second time in four months to elect a government. Polling will be watched by 40,000 soldiers and an army of election observers

THE Zulu monarch, King Goodwill Zwelithini, is believed to have gone into hiding with Swaziland's royal family, in fear of his life following an attack on one of his queens.

A STRING of bearded young men with dead staring eyes were paraded on Bahraini television confessing their involvement in an Iranian-backed plot to overthrow the government.

PREGNANCY is one of the leading causes of death among women in developing countries, claiming about 1,600 lives a day, a Unicef study says.



Russian soldiers guarding oil wells in Chechenia's Terski mountains cast their votes for the upcoming presidential elections. *Can Boris buy the election?, page 7* PHOTOGRAPH: VLADIMIR MASHATIN

Arab leaders call summit

Agencies in Cairo and Baghdad

EGYPT'S President Hosni Mubarak has begun inviting Arab leaders to a summit in Cairo on June 21, which will try to form a united front against Israel's new rightwing government.

The invitations follow a meeting that ended in Damascus at the weekend with President Hafez al-Assad of Syria and Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia — all members of the alliance against Iraq during its occupation of Kuwait in 1990-91. Iraq poured scorn on plans to exclude it from the meeting.

The Damascus communiqué said the three men "confirmed their intent to achieve a comprehensive and just peace . . . which requires that Israel also adhere to it seriously, with no backing away or reneging on anything that has been achieved" so far.

Babel, the Baghdad newspaper run by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son, Uday, said at the weekend: "The ingenuity of the 'new Arab wise men' has led to the calling of an Arab summit excluding Iraq to please America, Saudi Arabia, Gulf states and even Israel itself." Prospects for Arab reconciliation have "vanished" since the election of Binyamin Netanyahu as Israel's prime minister, the paper said.

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait split the Arab world and is one of several factors likely to undermine the summit's goals. There has been no significant Arab summit since the Gulf conflict.

Those invited so far are the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Yemen, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians.

S African police helpless before torrent of crime

David Beresford in Johannesburg

SOUTH Africa's chief of police warned last week that crime in the country was in danger of spinning out of control. Commissioner George Fivaz warned of the crisis in a briefing to local newspaper editors, and complained of shortages of staff and resources.

His warning coincided with a report by a leading South African bank, Nedcor, that crime was costing more than $9 billion a year — considerably more than is entering the country through foreign investment. The study showed that 80 per cent of households had fallen victim to crime in a two-year period.

Mr Fivaz said one of the police's biggest problems was a shortage of qualified personnel: he estimated that 75 per cent of detectives were not properly trained. This helped explain another extraordinary statistic released by police recently — that they have 18,000 unsolved murders on their books.

Training is not the force's only problem. Last week it was disclosed that an internal anti-corruption unit was receiving two complaints of criminal activity by police officers a day.

The prison service also has problems dealing with criminals. Before a demonstration by warders last week over pay, their union appealed to prisoners not to use the opportunity to escape. Last year there were about 100 break-outs a month — compared with 52 in Britain over the whole year.

Crime is routinely, and to some extent justly, blamed on social problems in the townships. But the country's whites have been disabused of any belief that criminal behaviour is restricted to blacks by two horrendous crimes over the past week.

In one a white youth giving a teenage couple a lift in his car produced a pistol, made them strip and ordered them to have sex. When the boy, aged 15, refused he was shot dead and the gunman raped the girl, aged 13 twice. In the other case, two white men and a woman killed and cut up a Dutch immigrant — carting the dismembered pieces around in a suitcase — in an attempt to claim his $690 pension.

UN destroys Iraqi germ war plant

Jon Leyne

INTERNATIONAL weapons inspectors are secretly destroying Iraq's main biological weapons factory, but the United Nations has given a warning that thousands of litres of deadly anthrax and botulinum cultures are still unaccounted for.

A UN team has been working since last month to destroy the massive al-Hakam complex near Baghdad. The operation is being carried out in secret so that Iraqi co-operation is not jeopardised.

Until last summer, President Saddam Hussein's government claimed al-Hakam was an animal feed plant. Then it finally revealed it was the main site for producing anthrax and botulinum. Iraq has admitted producing 19,000 litres of botulinum and 8,500 litres of anthrax toxin. Baghdad insists that it has now destroyed all its biological weapons, but has produced no evidence. There are fears that some toxins may be in the warheads of up to 16 Scud missiles which the UN is still looking for.

While Iraq is co-operating in the operation to destroy al-Hakam, there are fears of a new confrontation when the UN makes another attempt to find the missing Scuds, perhaps later this month.

The al-Hakam factory was opened in 1989 as part of a crash programme to produce biological weapons, stepped up after the invasion of Kuwait.

Huge fermenting vats were installed to produce the germs, which were tested on sheep, donkeys, monkeys and goats. As well as anthrax and botulinum, the Iraqis experimented with aflatoxin, which produces liver cancer, and gas gangrene, which causes flesh to rot. The Iraqis were also looking at agents that could be used to destroy crops.

At the same time, Iraqi scientists worked on how to deliver the toxins — the most difficult part of the operation.

Experts are still not sure how successful Iraq was. "Biological weapons are weapons of mass destruction if you can get people to breathe in a cloud of germs," said Professor Julian Perry-Robinson, of the Science Policy Research Unit at the University of Sussex in Britain. "But there is no sign that Iraq succeeded in doing that." Nevertheless, by its own admission, Iraq had put biological warheads on 25 missiles by the start of the Gulf war, as well as loading the toxins on bombs and artillery shells. The arsenal was potentially far more dangerous than Baghdad's nuclear capacity.

For years, foreign companies provided vital supplies for the programme under the mistaken belief that the material was for civilian use.

The British company Oxoid was one of the most important suppliers, providing 18 tonnes of growth media — the material used to culture the germs. Oxoid believed it was for medical use — it supplied the same material to hospitals around the world — but the quantity being ordered by Iraq appears eventually to have aroused suspicion in intelligence circles.

Oxoid has now been taken over by Unilever and renamed Unipath. It is one of more than 100 companies being sued in the United States by US Gulf war veterans who claim the companies share responsibility for the illness known as "Gulf war syndrome".

Other foreign suppliers provided fermenting vessels. Even some of the deadly bacteria were imported, with the suppliers being told they were for medical research.

Experts have warned that there's still a danger of Iraq rebuilding its biological capacity despite stringent controls. — *The Observer*

Evidence belies Tunisia's claims on human rights

Leslie Plommer

A GROWING body of evidence that independent comment is being suppressed in Tunisia is threatening to blacken the image of the Mediterranean tourist destination, whose government claims to be above the abuses that characterise much of the Arab world.

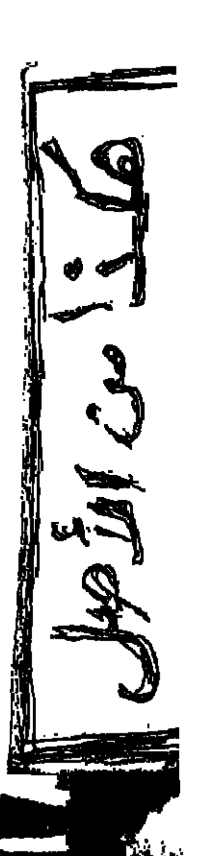
While Tunis has angrily rejected a recent European Parliament declaration of concern over civil rights restrictions in the country, a series of examples spanning the past six months lends support to concerns over harassment of government critics and their families, and the absence of press freedom.

On May 23, the day MEPs passed their resolution, the president of the International Federation of Human Rights, Patrick Baudoin, was bundled on to the next plane back to Paris after arriving in Tunis. Labelled an "undesirable" and accused of "provocative behaviour" by state-controlled media, Mr Baudoin had hoped to discuss the human rights situation with Tunisia's political leaders.

Two weeks earlier, the executive director of the Tunis-based Arab Institute of Human Rights, Frej Fenniche, was arrested at the airport while trying to board a flight to France to attend a meeting. Accused of carrying "compromising documents" on human rights in Tunisia, he was held for four days before being freed on May 14.

Another group, the long-established Tunisian League for Human Rights, has suffered persistent hounding by the authorities, who have tried to pack it with government sympathisers despite its status as a private body. On May 21, the league won a court case through which the interior ministry was trying to compel it to accept members it did not want.

In another case, the International Commission of Jurists (IJC) and Amnesty International lodged protests over the jailing for 11 years of the head of Tunisia's main legal opposition party on charges of being a Libyan agent. Both organisations say the charges and evidence against Mohammed Mouada were fabricated.



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Israel to squeeze Arabs from holy city

Shyam Bhatia in Jerusalem

SHEIKH Mohammed al-Hirsh is convinced he will be the first victim of the Jerusalem land grab orchestrated by rightwing Israeli settlers and ultra-Orthodox allies of the Prime Minister-elect Binyamin Netanyahu.

Leaked documents show Mr Netanyahu's government has drawn up plans to devour Arab East Jerusalem and reduce its Arab community to an insignificant minority, ending Palestinian hopes of regaining the other half of the city or sharing it as a joint capital.

The sheikh and his Bedouin tribe, the Jahaleen, have lost their court battle to keep land on which they pitched their tents for decades and must make way for 20,000 settlers who want to expand their Ma'aleh Adumim outpost, east of Jerusalem, by confiscating Arab properties.

The Jahaleen are only dimly aware that they are victims of a master plan to flood Jerusalem's Arab neighbourhoods with tens of thousands of Jewish families. The documents favour eight target areas for building new homes exclusively for Jews. By the end, Israeli planners hope, the Arabs will have to seek homes in the West Bank.

"Yasser Arafat can still dream of turning Jerusalem into the capital of his State," says one of Netanyahu's advisers. "Every time he says Jerusalem is his, we will build a thousand homes for Jews."

The godfather of the master plan is Jerusalem's deputy mayor, Shmuel Meir, who believes Arabs have no rights in the holy city. He is calling for the demolition of 2,000 Arab homes that he claims have been built without planning permission. He also aims to shut the Palestine Liberation Organisation's unofficial "foreign ministry" in Jerusalem, and 50 other buildings said to be affiliated to Arafat's Palestinian Authority.

"Now we can be relaxed," Mr Meir told his team at Jerusalem City Hall last week. "Everyone used to tell me that my ideas were crazy and no government would accept them. Now it's only a matter of hours or days before I present my file to Netanyahu. Work must start immediately, there's no time to waste."

Among Jerusalem's beleaguered Arab families Mr Meir's name evokes panic. Those who know him call him the "bulldozer". In the past three years he has been seen in the poorer Arab sections of the city, flanked by musclemen and Arab intermediaries who pinpoint properties ripe for taking. He is especially remembered for the takeover of six Arab homes in Silwan, a stone's throw from the Wailing Wall. Mr Meir says Silwan, home to 12,000 Arabs, is built on the site of the City of David and Jews have every right to "return" to the area. Today, six Jewish families live in Silwan, protected by armed guards paid for by the government.

Mr Meir's team has bought at least 50 more homes in Silwan for Jewish zealots, who will move in as the plan is implemented. Many Arab owners and sitting tenants who agreed to sell their properties have been guaranteed visas and jobs in Canada and the U.S. Others have been offered Israeli citizenship and new homes within Israel's pre-1967 borders.

Palestinian nationalists view Arabs who sell their homes to Jews as traitors, and the Mufti of Jerusalem has said they may face the death penalty. But huge profits can be made. A four-room house in Silwan was priced at $50,000 for Arabs; Mr Meir's "commandos" got it for $400,000.

Gun owners in Australia vent their fury

Christopher Zinn in Shepparton

THE backlash to Australia's plans for tough new gun laws, drafted after the Tasmanian massacre in April, has pushed rednecks and gun-crazed hillbillies into action. But while the paranoid minority and makeshift militias have grabbed the limelight, a majority of gun owners has been packing streets and civic halls in town and country.

In Shepparton, rural Victoria, more than 2,300 people jammed the community centre last week for what was described as the biggest meeting in the district since the anti-Vietnam war protests. It began with a minute's silence for the 35 victims of the Port Arthur shootings by a lone gunman on April 28. Most at the rally saw themselves as law-abiding citizens. They were farmers, volunteer bushfire fighters and shooters with Olympic aspirations — all bitter that planned firearms laws would leave them looking like criminals.

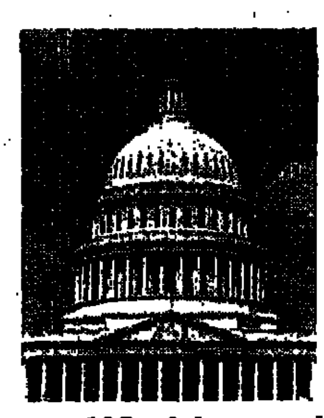
"Why should I give up my hobby because of some madman in Port Arthur?" said a marksman and hunter who stood to lose three historic military rifles. Under pending legislation, he would face five years in jail if he failed to hand them over.

But who in this fruit-growing area needs the semi-automatic rifles and shotguns that are to be banned nationally and subject to a $380 million "buy-back" scheme? Most of those present, if the lively meeting was any indication. Some, such as signwriter Geoff Wilson, were collectors. Others, such as panel-beater Ricky Bertoli and his wife, liked hunting rabbits, foxes and ducks. It was not only a sport, but a way of life that would be compromised, they said, if only bolt-action rifles and single-shot shotguns were allowed.

One farmer questioned the two state MPs brave enough to front the meeting, and hit the root of the problem as many country people see it — city people telling them what to do. "You are trying to legislate that we should not own automatic shotguns," he said. "You think we should shoot one fox with one shot and let two others run away to breed?"

The prime minister, John Howard, is standing firm on the gun controls. But an independent federal MP, Graeme Campbell, is forming a pro-gun party, which he predicts will have 50,000 paid-up members within a few months.

Nation's capital at flat-tax crossroads



The US this week

Martin Walker

LIKE so much else about the United States, the plight of Washington DC can be blamed squarely on the Founding Fathers. Article 1, section 8, clause 17 of the US constitution remains the clearest city charter ever penned.

"The Congress shall have power", it begins, "to exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever, over such District (not exceeding 10 miles square), as may by cession of particular states, and the acceptance of Congress, become the seat of the government of the United States."

Congress has exerted a wretched stewardship over the place the locals tend to call DC, for years doing little more than keeping the liquor taxes and the taxi fares low for their own convenience. DC stands for District of Columbia, and may be the more popular because most of the rest of the country uses the name Washington with scorn, to symbolise taxes, corruption, mismanagement and those activities of government that irritate the taxpayer.

DC residents are nominally US citizens, but do not fully participate in their nation's democracy. They are not a state, and so are not represented by a Congressman in the House of Representatives. Although the city's population, at some 600,000, is greater than that of Wyoming, it is not entitled to two US senators. Washingtonians have a token voice in Congress, a non-voting delegate to the House of Representatives. Seven years ago, Jesse Jackson was elected to be the city's "shadow senator", to agitate for statehood and full voting rights. The Senate did not prove welcoming. Jackson got a contract to be talk-show host on CNN, and little more was heard of the shadow senator.

The citizens elect a city council and a mayor, who exercise a degree of home rule. But whenever it chooses to assert itself, Congress may do so. And such has been the mismanagement over the years by Congress, and more recently by the dreadful administration of the notorious Mayor Marion Barry, that the city is technically bankrupt. Congress is ultimately responsible. It has accordingly appointed a control board to run the city budget, a process that has been dubbed by the city's fiery black politicians as "Massa taking back the old plantation".

The metaphor is potent, and not only because one of the city's streets, Volta Place, recalls the spot where the slaves from the Volta river region of West Africa were bought and sold. Congress is an overwhelmingly white institution, Washington a predominantly black city, at least in terms of votes. Hence the re-election of Mayor Barry, despite his public humiliation at being filmed smoking crack cocaine, being arrested and then sent to prison. It was one way for the many religious black voters to stress that they did believe in what Barry called his redemption from sin, and also to deliver a giant raspberry to the white political establishment.

A recent German ambassador, who had earlier been ambassador to South Africa, said the place was just like Johannesburg in the apartheid days. He has a point, but there are four Washingtons, rather than just a black and a white one. There is Washington as national monument, the great buildings that range along the Mall that runs from Congress to the White House and on to the Potomac river. It is a grand and handsome centre, a fitting imperial capital.

Then there is the white district, the north-western quadrant of the city, most of it sealed off from the black quarters by the delightful Rock Creek Park. The whites have the leafy suburbs, the embassies, the diplomatic residences, few murders, lots of fine restaurants and one or two good schools. The black districts have in recent years become the murder capital of the country, and their schools are a disgrace.

Finally, there is the Washington of the outer suburbs, which are nominally parts of the states of Maryland and Virginia, where the schools are better and the taxes lower. Traditionally one of the strengths of Washington was its black middle class, who date back to the Freemen's hospital and Howard University — which were founded after the civil war. Swollen by the equal opportunity hiring rules of the federal bureaucracy, the black middle class has grown apace, but they are now following the whites in fleeing to the suburbs. More than half of the city's own municipal work force lives outside its boundary.

Yet the US capital is also an affluent place. Its $31,136 per capita annual income is higher than that of any of the 50 states. The Washington city government's revenues are $8,958 per capita, higher than those of any other city in the country, and 40 per cent higher than New York's per capita revenue of $5,607. These figures disguise a sharp disparity between rich and poor. One citizen in four qualifies for Medicaid, the state-subsidised health system for the poor.

The worst problem is mismanagement, and an extraordinary system of political patronage which gives the city by far the largest proportion of public employees to citizens of any US city. It is twice as high as that in Chicago, and three times as high as Salt Lake City. Washington DC spends more per head on its schoolchildren, $9,500 a year, than anywhere else in the US, and yet its pupils have the lowest scores in reading and mathematics.

Last week, insurance groups began boosting the costs of fire insurance in Washington, and threatened to withhold cover altogether, because of the slowness of response of the city's emergency services. It can take up to eight hours before a policeman is dispatched to the scene in response to a 911 emergency call. Until the control board last month made an emergency grant to buy 75 new police cars, two of out of every three vehicles were immobilised for lack of spare parts. The city's children's home was reported by the courts to be "appalling and unfit to house animals of a lower level".



Washington is now at a crossroads: to continue as the Johannesburg of the Western hemisphere, or to become what more fanciful Republicans call Hong Kong on the Potomac. The mechanism would be the controversial flat tax, which was popularised this year by the quixotic presidential bid of the megarich publisher Steve Forbes. It could be in force in Washington by the end of this year, as a daring and unprecedented local experiment launched by Congress in the area over which they wield supreme authority.

Senators have agreed on a bipartisan bill that would cut income tax in Washington to a flat rate of 15 per cent

Republican and Democratic Senators have agreed on a draft bipartisan bill that would cut US income taxes in the city to a flat 15 per cent. Federal income taxes currently range in a series of bands up to 39.6 per cent.

The bill would scrap capital gains taxes on investments made in the city, and also sharply raise the level of allowances before income taxes apply. A married couple could make up to $30,000 a year before having to pay tax.

"I bet you a lot of money President Clinton signs it," said Joe Lieberman, a Democratic senator from Connecticut who is a long-standing colleague of Bill Clinton in the centrist Democratic leadership conference, and one of the authors of the bill.

"We have joined together in a bleeding heart issue to save the nation's capital," said Republican Jack Kemp, former housing secretary and a close friend of one-time presidential candidate Forbes.

"This is an urgent plea to the White House and the leaders of House and Senate. Do it now. People in this city desperately need urgent action," Kemp said as the bill was unveiled with Lieberman and Republican Senator Connie Mack of Florida at his side. With them stood Eleanor Holmes Norton, the non-voting representative of the city to Congress, who last month introduced a parallel bill in the House of Representatives.

The idea of transforming the 61 square miles of the capital into a tax haven has already been enthusiastically endorsed by the Republican Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich. His very conservative deputy, Congressman Dick Armey of Texas, has long been an enthusiast of a flat tax, and he has now become a co-sponsor of the bill put forward by Norton, who is a highly partisan Democrat.

The DC flat tax plan is expected to cost the US Treasury at least $700 million a year. The costs could be far more if wealthy Americans take advantage of the flat tax to move into what would become the country's only legal onshore tax haven.

The big losers would be the neighbouring states of Virginia and Maryland, whose suburbs are swollen by middle-class refugees fleeing the high taxes of the city.

There could, however, be a catch. Income tax is paid by city residents not only to the federal government, but also to the local DC government. Much of the savings in the federal tax might be clawed back by the DC taxes, at least for residents on average and slightly above average incomes. The real savings would come to high-income groups and investors, attracted by the capital gains cut, and to home-owners who would see the value of their properties soar.

This is only fair, since property values have been unduly depressed by the high taxes and rotten services of the city, highlighted this year by the total failure of the city government to clear the snow from the roads or to fill in the potholes for which the city is becoming legendary.

There was one whopper outside the French ambassador's residence, so large that it contained the mattress from a double bed. When the ambassador's wife went to inspect this curiosity, she lifted a corner of the mattress and found the bed frame underneath.

It is odd to drive from the Maryland suburbs, where the roads were cleared of snow and there are no potholes, and suddenly cross the line into dreadful DC. It is even odder to learn that the price of identical houses on a street can vary by more than $100,000, simply depending on whether they are in DC or just outside it.

The flat tax experiment would certainly be interesting, and the latest antics of the ridiculous Mayor Barry may yet provoke it. Speaker Gingrich threatened last week to restore full congressional control over the capital and end Washington's home rule after nearly 30 years of self-government. This would sideline Barry.

A racially charged political confrontation may finally be coming to a head between Congress and the city. It carries profound implications in this election year for President Clinton and the Democrats, who are desperate not to be associated with the notorious mayor of one of the most thoroughly misgoverned cities in the country.

For the Republican-run Congress, Washington DC is a perfect symbol of the corruption and inefficiencies of big civic government and Democratic rule. And as the one US city with a majority black population, run by an elected but palpably unfit black leader, Washington is the perfect target for Republicans to play the race card without ever mentioning skin colour.

The latest row began when Barry said the city's financial control board members, appointed by Congress, were "acting like Nazis", and carrying out the dictates of the white Congress to overrule the democratic vote of a black electorate. Barry supporters have sneered at the moderate blacks on the control board as "Uncle Toms" and "Negroes in white handkerchiefs". The constant clashes over budgets have now escalated, with the control board insisting on sacking some of the administrators who are among Barry's closest political allies.

"This is absolutely anti-democratic and un-American," Barry has charged. "It reminds me of what happened in Germany during the period when citizens were abrogated, their rights were abrogated — in a totalitarian kind of state."

But the mayor finally backed down. The control board rules, and the flat tax plan is starting to wind its way through the procedural bowels of Congress. In the meantime the black middle class drifts away, another generation of children is betrayed by the rotten schools, and the potholes gape ever wider.

And US voters have ever more cause to look at their mismanaged capital, and the politicians who are ultimately responsible, with a contempt that is thoroughly deserved.

Can Boris buy the election?

Yeltsin is doling out roubles and decrees by the handful to stay in power, writes **David Hearst**

IN THE beginning is the Word, carried aloft on a single black loudspeaker with two aerials on a telescopic spike. This bobs over the heads of the throng, the first sign that Boris Yeltsin is approaching. The streetwise voice growls and clucks. He is one of them. Then comes the shock of silver hair, the red face, and the eyes buried in deep trenches of jowly skin.

A frisson ripples through the moving scrum, and all sorts of improbable supplicants are caught in its epicentre. A girl, aged 17, in a white blouse and prim bouffant, who says somewhat alarmingly that she "represents the future", presses flowers into the hands of Boris. There's a long pause. The black box crackles into life. "I married too early, huh, huh, huh," says the voice. The presidential entourage, all men, mimic the presidential leer.

Then come the handouts. Two harvesters and a car for a group of Chechen villagers; 3 billion roubles to build a new church in Stavropol; 60 billion roubles for electronic factories in Zelenograd, 133 billion roubles for the miners in Vorkuta. Nobody can keep count.

A week before the first free elections for a Russian head of state, on June 16, President Yeltsin completed a whirlwind tour of the country. He distributed election promises like confetti. Every few steps of his walkabout, another pledge is made. It's even worse with the decrees. They are signed on the side of an armoured personnel carrier in Grozny, or the entrance to a mine shaft.

Yeltsin visits a museum in Archangelsk and immediately signs a decree about giving more money to museums. He visits a nuclear submarine shipyard and, hey presto, Russia gets another nuclear submarine. Projects rusting in dormant neglect suddenly come back to life. Peter the Great, a nuclear powered 25,000-ton cruiser lying idle for five years, 80 per cent complete, is suddenly finished.

The way this burst of decree-making has been worded makes clear that it is all for electoral show, with no real chance of becoming law.

The miners in Vorkuta, the Afghan vets in Volgograd, the electronic workers of Zelenograd all know that when the president disappears into his armoured Zil with a final wave, so do their chances of getting their claims back on the political agenda.

Why then does all this work? When Yeltsin began his campaign for re-election in February, he was in the worst position imaginable. He had just returned to work two months after his second heart attack, when a bungled Chechen commando raid on a Russian military airfield led to a second hostage-taking drama and a new national emergency.

Yeltsin was caught like a rabbit in headlights. He was seen to be weak, out of touch and cruel. His rating was 6 per cent. He was unelectable. Yet today practically all the polls have him leading over his main challenger, the Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov.

The comeback kid of Russian politics has risen from his political grave. He is slimmer, energetic and off the booze. His reactions are quick. He has travelled the length and breadth of this vast country. He is on every television news broadcast, on all channels, both public and private. He is in fact running a masterly campaign.

For political scientists who know their trade, Yeltsin's campaign strategy has been simple and effective. He held his hands up to the mistakes he made, such as launching the war in Chechenia and liberalising prices so quickly that millions of Russians lost all their savings. He acknowledges that factories are at a standstill. All he says is that under the Communists it would be worse.

"If people are convinced that the evil you are fighting is an absolute and eternal one, you are absolved," says Professor Dmitri Furman, of the Institute of European Studies.

Grigori Yavlinksi, the liberal economist and leader of the democratic opposition, put the same thought this way: "As it is impossible to prove that Boris Yeltsin is good, after everything that has happened in the country, his campaign managers are trying to prove that the opposition is extremely bad."

First stop on the propaganda offensive is television. Old nomenklatura placemen, the people who had long experience of serving as their master's voice, are in charge of state television. NTV, the independent channel that Rupert Murdoch has shown interest in, had to be dealt with slightly differently. It had a tradition of independent reporting, especially from Chechenia. It carried two kiss-and-tell interviews with Vyacheslav Kostikov, the acerbic press secretary Yeltsin had just fired, who said to the delight of all: "His only love and passion is power."

THE INITIAL reaction to television's growing independence was a clumsy one, reminiscent of how the party dealt with dissenting art in the seventies. A mysterious bulldozer destroyed a large ice logo NTV had erected in January on the road that Yeltsin takes home every day. NTV got the message. Igor Malashenko, the channel's director, announced he was joining Yeltsin's campaign team.

Since then all Russian television has been crammed with supportive messages, none of them too subtle. This is the perfect time for catching up on all those Gulag films you missed, because the small screen is full of them. "When I switch on the TV, I have the impression that Stalin died yesterday, not 40 years ago," one journalist wrote.

The small doses of Zyuganov, trying as hard as possible to sound moderate, reasonable and peaceful, are sandwiched by heavy political commentary. It is almost as if the Zyuganov message is carried with an Official Government Health Warning. The only place for Zyuganov to go unchallenged is on local television.

Then there is the message that the Kremlin puts out. Anatoli Chubais, the sacked privatisation minister, talked of "civil war" if the Communists came back to power. Similar scaremongering arguments have been put by Yeltsin's bodyguard, General Alexander Korzhakov, the commander of Moscow military district.

Meanwhile there is a real war, forgotten by the international community, going on inside Russia, one that has claimed more than 30,000 lives. Yeltsin recently boasted in Grozny: "There is no more war in Chechenia. I have brought you peace. There are only small separate groups of bandits."

The broken promises are almost incidental. Very few, least of all Russia's 5 million new small businessmen, believed Yeltsin when he said in Tver last week: "If we don't make a mistake on June 16, if we continue along the way we have chosen, the improvement will begin in one year." A familiar theme this. On October 28, 1991, Yeltsin promised the pain would last "about half a year". In autumn 1992, he pretended to see the first signs of increasing production.

The campaign team and its propaganda machine are using these gaffes to their own advantage, by putting out the line that the president can't change horses in midstream. In this they are playing on ancient fears of a change of power.

Yeltsin is beating a drum that only the native Russians can hear. Yes, his campaign team says, my men have grabbed their dachas, their cars, their stakes in privatised business, and made their mistakes. If you allow Zyuganov to power, his men will do the same thing. Better to leave the same élite in power because they, like the mosquitoes, have already been fed.

Naina, Yeltsin's wife, has also been carefully packaged. She plays the role of the simple, cordial woman, close to people's problems. "I don't want to whitewash my husband. He has made mistakes, but he has done many good things for Russia and he is doing everything he can so that all the CIS countries can live in peace and have political liberty."

The cynicism of these statements is extraordinary. Yeltsin's government is unable to pay its workers' wages, raiding the Central Bank reserves and thus printing money. And yet he keeps on promising gifts that he knows he cannot pay.

The financial hangover left from the election will be huge, at best delaying economic stabilisation for a year, at worst making another collapse of the rouble more likely. Yeltsin pays no heed to this. All that is left of his many incarnations — communist boss, democrat, nationalist — is the image of a tsar, sometimes kind, sometimes cruel, clinging to the one thing he knows best: the uses and abuses of power.

The Week In Britain James Lewis

'Super rich' are targeted in Lib Dem tax strategy

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS bucked the electioneering trend by promising that, if elected to office, the party would raise the top rate of income tax from 40 per cent to 50 per cent on those earning more than £100,000. The increase, which would raise an extra £1.1 billion from the "super rich", would be used to take another 750,000 poor people out of tax altogether.

This approach is in stark contrast to that of Labour which, in the run-up to an election, is terrified of being labelled as the party of high taxation. The Liberal Democrats already had a long-standing commitment to add 1p to the basic rate of income tax to spend on education, and the party's leader, Paddy Ashdown, believes it did not cost his party any votes at the 1992 election.

Mr Ashdown is anxious to ensure that his party's commitment to tackle poverty and unemployment will not be stolen when Chris Smith, Labour's shadow social security secretary, publishes his own plans in the next few months. The precise details of those plans have not yet been decided, but Labour is expected to raise the money to pay for them by levying a more voter-friendly "windfall" tax on the profits of public utilities.

DESPERATE as he is to avoid offending any section of the electorate, Labour's leader, Tony Blair, walked into a trap when he admitted in a magazine interview that he had occasionally smacked his three children when they were very young, though he had always regretted it afterwards. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children seized on his remarks and insisted that corporal punishment was not only an ineffective form of disipline but that it "can lead to more serious forms of abuse".

Though some of Mr Blair's own politically correct backbenchers professed to see this as mild blot on his moral reputation, others chose to remain quiet, having been reprimanded for airing their views on their leader's decision to send his eldest son to a selective, grant-maintained school.

Meanwhile, the Labour leader's wife, Cherie Booth, is taking steps to avoid political controversy. Having recently been appointed an assistant recorder (part-time judge) she has asked to be allowed to preside over civil cases only. This will minimise the risk of running into conflict with a possible Labour home secretary over a contentious issue such as criminal sentencing policy.

THE MORE the two main political parties battle for the high moral ground in education, the more they run the risk of confusing or alienating their supporters. Mr Blair discovered this to his cost last week when he proposed the "modernising" of the comprehensive system and teaching young people in "sets" (otherwise known as "setting") according to their abilities, rather than in mixed-ability classes.

Many Labour traditionalists feared that their leader was going cool on their cherished comprehensives, particularly since, in the same speech, he commended grammar schools as "ladders of opportunity". Others confused "setting" with "streaming", in which pupils are selected by ability at the beginning of secondary school and remain in that stream throughout their career.

While appealing to residual sentimentality about the grammar school era, Mr Blair insists that he is committed to the comprehensive system. In contrast, the Education Secretary, Gillian Shephard, is proposing to allow schools to select half of their pupils on merit — the latest sign that the Government intends is to reintroduce grammar schools by the back door.

THOMAS HAMILTON, who shot and killed 16 pupils and a teacher at their school in Dunblane, Scotland, had long been regarded with suspicion by police and social workers, but there was insufficient evidence to justify the withdrawal of his gun licence or to prosecute him for sexual offences against children.

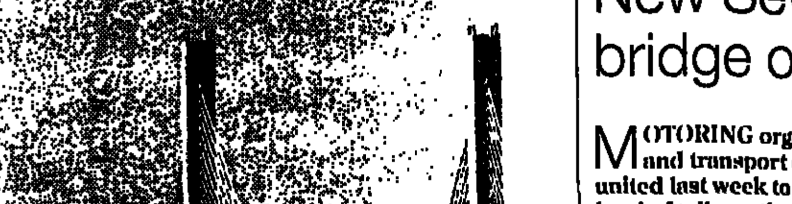
An inquiry into the massacre was told that, four years before the shootings, the detective heading the child protection unit of the Central Scotland police force warned his superiors that Hamilton was "a scheming, devious and deceitful individual" and "an unsuitable person" to be allowed to hold guns. Detective Sergeant Paul Hughes, who had investigated parents' distress at the treatment of children attending a summer camp organised by Hamilton, also concluded that Hamilton posed a risk to children. But no action was taken.

However, the inquiry heard that Det Sgt Hughes's report was not lodged in Hamilton's firearms file. Chief Inspector Colin Mather, who handled the renewal of Hamilton's certificate, said that the warning delivered by Det Sgt Hughes might have made him have reservations about the application.

TWO WOMEN were bitten by a rabid bat at a pub in Newhaven, Sussex. They were given anti-rabies injections and have not, so far, shown any signs of being infected.

Newhaven is a cross-Channel port, and officials thought the bat could have arrived on a container ship, or flown across the Channel, or even through the Tunnel. The strain of rabies found in the bat differs from that found in dogs, but it killed a man in Finland in 1985.





New Severn bridge opens

MOTORING organisations and transport operators united last week to condemn the level of tolls on the second Severn Crossing as the impressive £330 million motorway link across the estuary was officially opened by the Prince of Wales, *writes Geoffrey Gibbs.*

Dignitaries at the ceremonies on the bridge, seen left, were unanimous in praising the engineering achievement that had seen the 5,000-metre structure completed on time and on budget despite difficult weather and tides.

The AA and RAC criticised the one-way tolling system under which drivers pay to use the bridge only when crossing from England to Wales. An AA spokesman said the toll would result in drivers continuing to divert to less suitable routes.

The Road Haulage Association, which represents 10,000 firms, said the toll on the crossing was too high. Tolls on the two crossings are £3.80 for cars, £7.70 for small goods vehicles, and £11.50 for heavy goods vehicles and buses. Under an Act of Parliament they will be adjusted in line with inflation while the concession is held by the privately-owned Severn River Crossing consortium.

The first toll-paying vehicles started flowing across the three mile-long structure last week.

PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF M...

Phone taps double over past five years

Richard Norton-Taylor

MINISTERS authorised a record number of telephone taps last year, according to official, though incomplete, figures published last week.

Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, and Michael Forsyth, the Scottish Secretary, approved more than 1,000 warrants at the request of the security and intelligence agencies.

The figures are contained in the latest annual report of the Interception of Communications Act Commissioner, Lord Nolan. He does not disclose the number of taps authorised by Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, or by Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland Secretary.

A total of 910 telephone tap warrants were approved by the Home Secretary last year, nearly double the 473 of five years ago. The figures for Scotland were respectively 137 and 66.

Lord Nolan gives no indication of the breakdown between different targets. He says only that the number of warrants issued to counter domestic "subversion" was "very small".

Two further reports published last week clear the Government's three main intelligence-gathering agencies — MI5, MI6 and GCHQ — of any wrongdoing.

However, they do not disclose the number of warrants the agencies obtained to bug and burgle private property, as opposed to tapping telephone lines.

Lord Justice Stuart-Smith, the judge appointed to monitor their activities, officially confirms that GCHQ, the Government's electronic eavesdropping agency, targets British citizens as well as the communications of foreign countries.

He says MI6 operations abroad include obtaining documents "which might involve theft . . . or payment to an agent which might involve bribery".

The three reports confirm that not one complaint to tribunals set up between 1985 and 1994 has been upheld. The tribunals meet in secret, and complainants are not told whether they have been under surveillance.

Lord Justice Stuart-Smith also points to different systems whereby the police and MI5 obtain property warrants. The police get authority under non-statutory guidelines from a senior police officer; MI5 has to have statutory authority to obtain warrants from the Home Secretary.

One suggestion is that the police should seek warrants from the courts, but MI5 does not want to follow suit, even if this has the advantage of having the same system for both. Lord Justice Stuart-Smith said it was important to settle the question without delay.

Fifty ways to lose your work force

IN THE blunt days of Victorian capitalism, they called it the axe, the boot, the chop, the elbow, the bum's rush, *writes John Ezard.*

Now they dress it up in matiness or polysyllables: getting you out of a rut, re-rating your future, democratic streamlining, flattening organisational structures, shaping up for tomorrow.

These are a few of the 50 euphemisms for the sack in a new mini-thesaurus issued last weekend by the GMB union. It was released to mark the US management guru Stephen Roach's public loss of faith in "downsizing" policies.

The new phrases lead to the same fate as the old words. But this is now called a CRS (career realignment scheme), which is followed by a PPEA (personal premature exit agreement).

The terms include concentrating on core activities; equalisation of the payroll to manpower requirement; production schedule rearrangement initiative; and re-configuring the business.

The union list joins the jargon which has already crept into management lexicons: delayering, dehiring, delevelling, right-sizing, skill-mix readjustments, unassigning, core re-emphasis and "volume reduction windows".

John Edmonds, the union's general secretary, said all the phrases meant the same thing — "sacking you without you knowing what's going on.

"If the guru of downsizing has given up, then so should the managers of disinformation," he added.

Howard forced to climb down again

Alan Travis

THE threat of imminent High Court action last week forced Michael Howard to withdraw a restrictive regime introduced only four days previously for hundreds of thousands of applicants who want to stay temporarily in Britain.

The Home Secretary has had to climb down over six new compulsory immigration forms to be completed by all overseas students, husbands and wives applying to stay with their spouses, visiting business people, artists and writers and elderly and other dependent relatives applying to stay with their families.

More than 30,000 people have been asked to complete the forms since they were introduced last month. Last week they became compulsory for all those seeking leave to remain or settle in the UK.

The threat of legal action was brought by immigration lawyers, who believe the forms require the applicants to supply an extensive range of original documents, including grandparents' birth and marriage certificates. Failure to provide originals, not copies, of all the requested documents will automatically mean the application fails and the person may face deportation.

Labour's immigration spokesman Douglas Henderson said last week: "It is another humiliation for a home secretary who thinks he can trample over existing law without reference to Parliament."

The application for judicial review came from the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association, representing 650 lawyers, who said the procedures amounted to "a draconian and absolutist approach" that threatened to deprive thousands of people wanting to remain in Britain of their legal rights.

A High Court judge, Mr Justice Dyson, agreed, and indicated he would have granted permission for the legal challenge to go ahead if the Home Secretary had not agreed to withdraw the forms.

The lawyers claimed the new forms meant no application would be valid unless it was submitted on the correct form and all the documents listed on the form were provided. The forms even ask for documents that go beyond those required by the immigration rules. Those seeking leave to stay on grounds they have British ancestors have to supply original birth and marriage certificates for their parents and grandparents, even though there is no requirement that they were married. The form gives no space to explain why a particular document is missing.

Laurie Fransman, ILPA co-founder, described the Home Secretary's decision as a huge climbdown: "We hope he will now abandon his flawed initiative entirely. That would be the proper, just and lawful course."



Do you want to know a secret? Paul McCartney welcoming the Queen to Liverpool last weekend, when she officially opened the 'Fame' school set up by the former Beatle PHOTOGRAPH: EDDIE BARFORD

University to charge fees

Donald MacLeod

BIRMINGHAM university will in 1997 become the first university to charge students fees, in a move that will lead to British higher education being split into a two-tier system. The university made the announcement at a meeting of the Russell group of vice-chancellors from the 20 top universities. Its lead is certain to be followed by other institutions concerned that funding cuts are costing them their international competitive edge.

After repeated threats by universities since the Government's November Budget, the announcement by Sir Michael Thompson, the vice-chancellor of Birmingham, at their regular confidential meeting in Bloomsbury, London, marked a turning point, breaching the principle of free higher education and throwing down a challenge to the Government.

He said Birmingham would charge new students £700 top-up fees from 1997. It would include this levy in its financial plans when they are submitted to the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

HIV risk in oral sex

Tim Radford and Chris Mihill

AN AIDS research centre in the United States warned last week that oral sex could carry a higher risk of HIV transmission than previously thought.

"On the basis of reports on humans and our study, unprotected receptive oral intercourse should be added to the behaviours that place people at risk for infection by HIV-1," said Dr Ruth Ruprecht, of the laboratory of viral pathogenesis at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. In another HIV research report, in the Lancet, scientists say younger people fight HIV infection more effectively than older people.

The oral sex experiments, reported in the US journal Science, were done on macaque monkeys, and with simian immunodeficiency virus, or SIV, closely related to HIV. Results from animal experiments are not always a guide to human hazard. But researchers had assumed oral infection was less likely than that through a wound or sore.

Dr Ruprecht and colleagues placed various concentrations of SIV on the tongues of seven monkeys. Six became infected. Two have died of Aids. "The minimal dose needed to achieve infection after oral exposure in controlled laboratory conditions was 6,000 times lower than that needed for rectal infection."

This does not mean oral sex is more dangerous; studies have shown rectal intercourse is the high-risk activity. But the researchers say it is a sign that unprotected oral sex with an infected partner is unsafe.

Young still think of war

John Carvel

SURVEY evidence published this week suggests one field in which British schoolchildren can beat the world as handsomely as their parents ever did.

The prejudices of children aged 10 to 16 are as vigorous as 50 years ago and are still mainly directed at Germany. When asked what came into their minds when they thought about Germany, 78 per cent of the 800 interviewed said the second world war, which ended 35-41 years before they were born. Half brought up Hitler. Only 2 per cent thought German industry or food worth mentioning.

Germany is overwhelmingly the country they would least like to visit, named by 43 per cent compared with 26 per cent who would prefer that country to avoid Bosnia. It was also named by 57 per cent as the most boring country and — in a triumph of prejudice over national curriculum geography — it got most votes as Europe's poorest nation.

The survey was commissioned by Gestetner, which is providing free fax machines for schools this year to help children interact with schools in Europe.

Two-thirds thought there should be a single European currency, but most of them said it should be the pound. Half thought there should be a single European language, but nearly all of them stipulated English.

Gridlock faces the Third World

TRANSPORT and the pollution it causes is just one section in one chapter of the report submitted to the UN Habitat II conference on human settlements. It comes after water, sanitation, drainage and the disposal of human waste — all massive problems by themselves. Yet the automobile has already begun to throttle urban life in the new cities of the South as disastrously as it does in the North. And in Asia a fierce struggle has been launched to capture the new private car market from Delhi to Jakarta. The new tigers are already choking in the fumes and we shall all suffer.

No one denies that the worst offenders are found in the developed societies. Of the half billion vehicles around the world in 1990, around one-third were in Europe, another third in North America, while the final third was divided between the rest of the world. The gap between passenger-car ratios was even more striking: Nigeria had nine cars per thousand inhabitants in 1991, against 303 in Japan and 588 in the US. But the ratios are rising in all but the very poorest countries. And the Habitat report makes it clear that urban South is even less well placed than urban North to cope with the consequences.

Already around three-quarters of all traffic accidents occur in the South, even though there are many more road vehicles in the North. Most cities were built for earlier forms of transport and new highways cause housing loss. The quality of public transport is usually poor and any increase in supply is outstripped by population growth. Vehicles are badly maintained, over-used and often run on poor quality fuel. Anyone who has gasped for air from Santiago to Havana, or from Saigon to Harbin, knows what this means. Publicly owned "public" transport is on the decline. This can mean the emergence of small minibuses or minivans serving outlying communities or peripheral slums that otherwise would remain isolated. But it adds to the congestion, pollution and the high proportion of unsafe vehicles on the roads. The Habitat report also points out that while some aspects of the urban environment, such as sanitation and safe water, will improve if incomes rise, fossil-fuel consumption and carbon dioxide emissions will also rise.

Asia has more than one-third of the world's population — the bulk in two countries, India and China, where automobile ratios are still low. Both are now intent upon entering the age of the great little car economy, and foreign manufacturers are panting at the prospect. The standard complaint against the new car consumers is not that they will add to global warming, but that they may try to protect their markets against foreign competition. US and European manufacturers are jostling for places in China where Beijing has sufficient muscle-power to enforce participation in joint ventures. They may now be threatened by Japan where last week Honda announced its plans to build a new low-priced subcompact. The new "Asia car" is designed for a market of 4 million, which is expected to double by the end of the decade.

Is there any chance that anything will be done in this corner of the Habitat II agenda? The North is ill-placed to lecture the South unless it takes action on its home ground. But unless a new development strategy can be devised that keeps the automobile under control, our mistakes will soon be repeated *on a global scale*.

Tories sing the summertime blues

NEARLY a year after his "put up or shut up" resignation as Tory leader, John Major has taken the Conservative party on the long route back to square one. His admirers will point out that he has survived for another 12 months, which at one stage did not seem possible. Yet last week's Guardian-ICM poll reveals a Tory party that is still 16 points behind Labour even on the adjusted figures, and much more than that on every unadjusted index. As a yardstick of Mr Major's achievements since last June, *it is distinctly* underwhelming. The Conservatives have entered the final year of their administration failing to dent Labour's lead, unable to rally support behind their principal policies, heading into an uncertain summer over Europe and Ireland and, unless they can get a grip on events, facing almost certain general election defeat. It all adds up to a duff government, whose middle-ranking ministers are increasingly more preoccupied with positioning themselves for the succession contest than with defeating Tony Blair.

Give or take the odd monthly polling blip, attributable to Emma Nicholson or to the South-East Staffordshire byelection effect, the Conservatives remain almost exactly where they were after Mr Major forced the leadership issue last year. In the context of spring 1995 that meant that the slide was brought to an end. The problem is that electoral slide has been replaced by electoral stasis. Since last summer Mr Major has tried everything to rein in the Labour lead but without effect. The latest throw, the non-co-operation strategy in Europe over the beef ban, has been just as ineffectual as everything else that preceded it. Tory MPs who are predisposed to think well of populist Europhobia are *naturally* adamant that the country is fizzing with enthusiasm for their cause. The reality, as the Guardian poll shows, is that this is self-delusion of a very high order. For every voter who is more inclined to vote Tory as a result of Mr Major's lurch against Europe (and only a handful are), 28 are not. Even among Tory voters, the policy provokes a four-to-one negative effect. Such a situation benefits neither Britain nor the Conservatives. It is now urgent that Mr Major finds his way into an end-game in the beef war.

Yet it is not easy to see how he will do it. June may well turn out a much more destructive month for the standing of the Government than has yet been fully appreciated. The Northern Ireland strategy — the one more or less untarnished achievement of the Government — lies in tatters. And it is almost impossible to see where the European strategy can now productively lead. Every week that passes brings the non-co-operation strategy more conspicuously into discredit. Two weeks ago, aid and the single market; last week, Michael Howard's dozen vetoes; this week, with a scheduled general affairs ministerial council, the list lengthens further. Nothing has been achieved that could not have been better secured by less disruptive means, while much has been lost which Britain can ill afford to be without. Paradoxically, the attention now being paid to each European ministerial meeting only underlines the useful, untrumpeted benefits which the European Union brings (and which British non-co-operation is upsetting). Every week that passes brings diminishing and opposite returns to those which the Government intended. The prospect that Britain will disrupt the Florence summit this month is increasingly politically unappealing. The nearer we get the more small-minded and silly it looks, and the less principled or proud. An easy summer for the *Government? Its troubles are only just beginning.*

Policy by parrots

THOSE who insist that Europe should only be a continent of nation states — and much will be said along those lines in the Commons this week — ought to think about what happened in Luxembourg on Monday. The occasion was a meeting of European Union fisheries ministers, who had gathered to discuss the European Commission's proposal to cut up to 40 per cent of the union's fishing fleet over the next six years in order to preserve threatened stocks.

One by one, the fisheries ministers said their pieces. In every single instance, the message was Not Me, Guv. Fifteen times, in 15 different ways, *ministers explained that overfishing is something* that other countries' fishing industries do. Each minister said that his or her own national fleets should not be cut. If there were to be cuts they should be borne by the others.

Opening bids in a long negotiation these may be, but they are also the inevitable structural limitations of a system in which defence of national rights is seen as more important than collective international problem-solving. The fundamental fact about the fish in European waters is that there are fewer and fewer of them. Stocks of mackerel, herring and sole are being rapidly and perhaps terminally depleted. Fifteen national governments will argue from now until Kingdom come unless there is an international body with sufficient authority to force them to co-operate.

That is why it falls to the European Commission to propose the only policy which is good for the long-term health of Europe's fishing industry. Thank goodness for the Commission. It speaks for the wider interest of Europe and its seas. Without it, a deal could of course be struck, but it would be a much less desirable one for Europe. A Europe of nation states, in other words, is simply not enough.

The true scandal of the child abusers

For far too long people in authority have failed to take appropriate action against those who exploit the innocent, argues **Jon Snow**

GRAHAM was 15 when he described his life in a London paedophile ring. He was only one of many rent boys we saw at the New Horizon Youth Centre. *He named a prominent* back-bench MP, an academic and a cleric.

That was 25 years ago, and at that time, as a naive youth worker, I thought his histrionics — as he broke down in tears in front of me — were a consequence of the ghastly, abused life he led, and that the names he conjured were to attract attention. However, a reporting-life later, I am convinced that Graham told the truth. For once again journalists find themselves battling first with authority, then with the libel laws, to publish the truth about a vast web of abuse.

From East Belfast's Kincora *Boys' Home, via Leicestershire*, Staffordshire and London, to the children's homes of Clwyd in Wales, we have witnessed 25 years of cover-up. Cover-up not to protect the innocent, but to protect the regularly named elements of the British establishment who surface whenever widespread evidence of child abuse is exposed. From the public schools right through to the Catholic and Anglican churches, child abuse has been allowed a special place of sanctuary.

It was perhaps most notoriously summed up in the obituary posted after the death of Sir Peter Hayman in the Times of April 9, 1992: ". . . a distinguished diplomatic career . . . knighted in 1971 . . . deputy under secretary FCO . . . High Commissioner to Canada until 1974 . . . retirement damagingly disrupted . . . police raided his flat . . . discovered he was a member of Paedophile Information Exchange . . . 45 volumes of diaries, entries relating to sexual experiences."

Poor old Sir Peter was allowed to remain titled and to resign his retirement jobs quietly. The Times goes on to tell us merely that the "lustre of his achievements was sadly tarnished in 1981, when he was named in the House of Commons by an MP".

Four years on from Hayman's death, the evidence is that nothing has changed. Because threaded through the repeated refusal to publish and act upon the findings of child-abuse inquiries is the compromise lying at every level of British officialdom whenever and wherever paedophilia raises its head.

Social workers, police, security services, local and national political figures remain the common factors in the fall-out from the inquiries. In part this is genuinely to protect those against whom there is no sustainable evidence, but in part it is because there is a depressing acceptance that "it *goes on*".

In case after case the cycle is described — a child is "taken into care", then abused in a home, handed on to an outside paedophile ring and out on to the rent-boy/prostitution circuit beyond, if he or she lives that long. Clwyd boasts 12 suicides in its records.

But in the end this is not simply *about a range of disturbed adults* who exploit children for their own gratification. Nor is it only about people in public life who are given an unrevealed "second chance" because of an "unfortunate lapse".

It is about a society that refuses to give the most vulnerable children in its midst the care and protection they deserve. The Audit Commission and Parliament have continually provided evidence that the care system itself is the most effective and proven structure for abuse and failure.

Centrepoint and New Horizon, still working with the young homeless in London's West End, both bear witness to that failure. *Between 30 per cent and 40 per cent* of all young homeless people seen have been through "care". Home Office figures reveal 38 per cent of all young prisoners and 23 per cent of all adult prisoners have been "in care".

Yet the 60,000 youngsters in the care system right now cost taxpayers £600 million a year to look after. What a terrible return for our money. Not only do we engineer fuel for the paedophile trade, but where the "product" survives that ordeal, he or she often goes on to offend so seriously that it costs another £1,000 a week to keep them "out of circulation".

From public schools to the Catholic and Anglican churches, child abuse has been allowed a special place of sanctuary

Part of the Northern Ireland peace process will have to include coming to terms with the role that child abuse played in the territory's "dirty war". Part of the obligation to publish the still *unpublished Clwyd report* must be to prosecute and jail those in high and low places who traded upon those innocent lives.

But do we still retain the infrastructure that can rise to the greatest challenge of all: to make good the collapse of parenting, whether through death, illness, poverty or failure?

Surely the cardinal task of the community is to offset the worst with the best. Low-waged, ill-motivated people, working long hours with unloved and troubled youngsters who are rarely "in care" through any fault of their own, can not possibly be a route to success.

Is it any wonder that 75 per cent of these young people leave care with no educational qualifications? But so long as people in authority remain so reluctant to publish, will we in Britain ever do much about it?

Round up the ritual failures

Northern Ireland's peace process is back on hold. **Martin Kettle** reviews a wasted opportunity

THE 30 months of what is still formally dignified as the Northern Ireland peace process have been punctuated with what Sir Patrick Mayhew calls "shit or bust days". At such moments, ministers, politicians and civil servants have toiled long, painful hours to ease the next stage of the journey.

Last week saw a classic example — sweaty hours spent in the June heat to bring forth the detailed procedural arrangements between London and Dublin for the talks, which started in Belfast on Monday.

The end product of the week's Anglo-Irish efforts was, as usual, an intricately balanced package fully comprehensible only to initiates. Yet if this were June 1995, not June 1996, it would almost certainly be the kind of skilfully crafted, professional compromise that would have sealed one of the genuinely great goals of the whole process: the moment when Sinn Fein sat down *with the Ulster Unionists* to discuss Northern Ireland's future.

But this is June 1996 and, with the IRA refusing to renew its ceasefire, Monday was another day of traditional and recognisable Northern Ireland ritual. Everyone played the part to which he or she is long accustomed: Mayhew regretful, Dick Spring impatient, David Trimble tetchy, John Hume sanctimonious, Ian Paisley bombastic and Gerry Adams deceitful.

Instead of being the threshhold of the new Northern Ireland, it was another trip down the echoing corridors of the old. No matter how hard most of them pretend that the peace process is still alive, Monday's talks *proved it is bust without a* resumed IRA ceasefire.

It is easy to say that this was foreseeable all those months ago, when John Major and Albert Reynolds stood by a Christmas tree in Downing Street and wished that Santa would bring peace in Northern Ireland. Many good judges believed it would end this way, because in the end there was not enough in it for Sinn Fein to risk the historic compromise which was all that could democratically be offered. Yet many equally good judges thought that this pessimistic determinism was misplaced, and that there genuinely was an opportunity that had not previously existed.

Before it becomes the new accepted wisdom that the peace process was a brave but naive venture whose collapse was inevitable, it needs to be asserted in the strongest and clearest terms that this was not so. Four broad and underlying factors in the Northern Ireland situation began to change significantly in the 1990s and still exist today. They were: first, the acceptance by a Conservative government that it might be possible to reach a new all-party Anglo-Irish agreement in return for an end to the IRA's war; second, the IRA's genuine interest in what it calls the totally unarmed strategy towards republican goals; third, signs of political modernisation and pluralism in the Irish Republic; and, fourth, the continuing division and even fragmentation of unionism.

None of these subtle changes is individually the cause of the opportunity for peace that opened up in 1993, and is now disappearing before our eyes. The chemistry of the four together made this moment possible, against the background of a continuing, but sporadically expressed, popular will for peace.

These changes in no way made a settlement inevitable. Yet the Downing Street Declaration opened up the possibility. It was the political precondition without which the IRA could not allow the process to reach its next goal — the eventual IRA ceasefire in August 1994.

The political importance of this ceasefire was enormous. It meant Sinn Fein could be brought into political dialogue and, later, into a structured all-party talks process. To do that, however, meant persuading sufficient unionist opinion to take part, too.

Some say Major was wrong to do it that way, and that he should have focused all his attention on deal-making with Sinn Fein and pressed ahead more quickly, as Albert Reynolds, among others, wanted. That was, and is, unrealistic unless you believe — as some do — that British policy should be to withdraw from *Northern Ireland*, irrespective of the wishes of those who live there.

Like most people in Britain, though, Major had a more modest aim — to achieve peace on the basis of a new constitutional settlement democratically acceptable to the citizens of Northern Ireland. With that as the goal, the fundamental art was to get Sinn Fein (without whom peace is impossible) and sufficent unionists (without whom democratic endorsement is impossible) round the table to discuss a new settlement. That is why Trimble, as the leader of the only large block of unionists plausibly willing to take part on those terms, is as important in his own way as Adams is in his.

But Major got it wrong. Although undermined in his own party at home, he still waited too long before accepting the ceasefire was genuine. He then wasted time finding a way out of the decommissioning maze. When the Mitchell report gave him such a chance, he mishandled it, perhaps his biggest error.

Major should have been more aware of the effect of his approach on republicans in late January. Yet having been at first too cautious about the ceasefire, he had by then become too incautious and lost the balance. Hemmed in though he was at Westminster, he had Labour's support. Could he not have talked directly to Adams at this time?

In retrospect it would surely have been worth this and other risks — such as a peace referendum — to save a ceasefire that Adams, too, had an interest in preserving.

Without a ceasefire, the peace process is nothing of the sort. Perhaps the IRA has a *surprise up its* sleeve. If not, the constitutional parties may spend the coming weeks talking as though the process is still alive: in fact they are replaying the failed Brooke/Mayhew talks of 1991-92.

IMF holds a gold key for the Third World

DEBATE
Kevin Watkins

GOD gave Moses clear guidelines for protecting vulnerable people in debt. They are set out in the book of Leviticus, where creditors are told: "When your brother cannot support himself . . . you shall not charge him interest on a loan, either by deducting it from the capital sum, or by adding repayment." For those hoping that later divine revelation would adopt a more market-friendly tone, further disappointment was in store, with a full debt write-off ordered every seven years.

All the world's great religions provide an ethical framework for dealing with debt — and for good reason. While credit has the power to generate wealth and enhance prosperity, the unrestrained claims of creditors can destroy the social fabric.

Does God fail to grasp the logic of credit markets? This appears to be the view of the International Monetary Fund's managing director, Michel Camdessus, who is obstructing progress on a debt relief plan for the poorest countries in advance of the Group of Seven's Lyons summit.

Every year Africa transfers to its creditors — principally northern governments, the World Bank and the IMF — around $10 billion, more than the region spends on health and education combined.

Interest and capital arrears have doubled since 1990. Relative to ability to pay, Africa's $210 billion debt stock and repayment obligations are higher than in Latin America at the height of the debt and remain a big obstacle to recovery.

In a civilised world, the human suffering caused by Africa's debt would not be tolerated. In Uganda, one in five children does not live to his or her first birthday. Most fall victim to infectious diseases easily eradicated by low-cost primary health intervention. Yet for every dollar on health, the Ugandan government spends five on debt repayment.

In Zambia, public spending on primary education has been slashed under an IMF "stabilisation" programme. According to the IMF there is no alternative — a view which ignores the fact that Zambia is spending 10 times more on repaying the IMF than on primary education.

For less than is currently spent on debt, it would be possible to make investments that would save the lives of about 21 million children and provide more than 90 million girls with a basic education. Northern governments ought to regard such investments as a priority. So why has so little been done? Partly because the industrial countries have been more concerned to maximise repayments to themselves; and partly because about half Africa's debt payments are directed to the IMF and the World Bank, both of which have traditionally rejected debt relief.

This is starting to change. Following Britain's lead, several G7 countries are pressing for multilateral debt relief. Last year, the World Bank admitted, to the fury of the IMF, that multilateral debt reduction was vital to economic recovery in many countries.

The upshot is a proposed debt reduction facility, drafted by the World Bank. This would buy up debt owed by the poorest countries with funds provided by multilateral and bilateral donors, in effect writing it off. To qualify for debt relief, countries would have to adhere to an IMF reform programme for six years.

The plan is opposed by Germany and Japan, however, and by the IMF. Mr Camdessus has denounced debt relief as a "moral hazard", claiming it encourages governments to borrow recklessly. Instead, he is urging donors to finance the Fund's Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF), which lends to the poorest countries. This has been rejected by Britain and the US.

With aid budgets under mounting pressure, they insist that the IMF should generate resources for debt relief — and they are right. By selling off 10 per cent of its gold stocks, the Fund could write off the debt owed to it by the poorest countries in Africa. Were the interests of Mexico or Russia at stake, there is little doubt that Mr Camdessus's objections would have been overridden long ago.

Kevin Watkins works for Oxfam

Last temptation of Bob Dole

The Republicans' likely presidential candidate is being pushed to ditch his economic principles. **Alex Brummer** reports from Washington

IT WAS a typical Bob Dole moment. Speaking at a rally in the heartland of car country at Warren, Michigan, the Republican presidential candidate acidly quipped: "I can't tell you how glad I am to be able to make this speech before President Clinton got a copy of it and delivered it himself." This was not the inspirational stuff that American citizens have come to expect of their leaders but reflects the reality of the 1996 race for the White House as run by the introspective Mr Dole.

In his final act, before leaving the US Senate last week, Mr Dole, the departing majority leader, forced a vote on an amendment to balance the budget. And he used a campaign speech to suggest that the deficit was, in effect, a "stealth tax" which, through the interest charges on the national debt, was costing the average working family $36,000 extra on their mortgage; $1,400 more for their student loans and $700 on their car loans. These are not the words of a Republican who would be easily persuaded by the tax-cutting nostrum.

But Mr Dole — who is trailing his Democratic opponent by 17 points in the opinion polls — has a huge problem. The election economy appears all but perfect. "As a macro proposition, the economy is in the best shape for 30 years," says the deputy treasury secretary, Lawrence Summers. Mr Summers is not simply beating the drum, the figures speak for themselves. The US unemployment rate, at 5.6 per cent, is far below the 6 per cent mark most economists regard as the natural level of full employment.

Since August 1993, 7 million jobs have been created. Inflation is well below the 3 per cent mark. The budget deficit has been cut in half, to $130 billion, to where it represents 1.7 per cent of gross domestic product, against 4.9 per cent when Clinton took over.

On the global economic front, a combination of words and co-ordinated action among the G7 nations has lifted the value of the dollar, bond yields have been ratcheted downwards, Mexico has been rescued from near disaster and the Nafta and World Trade Organisation treaties have been ratified.

It is against this formidable statistical backdrop that Mr Dole must make the case that it is he, rather than President Clinton, who is better qualified to nurture economic expansion. He is, of course, not entirely without weapons.

Putting aside Whitewater and the character issues, which are certain to be part of the Dole armoury, there are a number of more subtle economic trends into which Mr Dole may seek to tap. Although unemployment is low, concern about job insecurity remains high, as symbolised by the current strike at planemaker McDonnell Douglas, where workers are demanding greater certainty. The present growth rate of 2.2 per cent, in the first quarter, is significantly below where it has been historically, productivity is disappointing and real incomes, for most Americans, have been flat.

In addition, no political leader, including the president, has had the courage to tackle the potentially imploding finances of an over-generous social security system.

Early last month, in an effort to put some intellectual punch into a campaign going nowhere, Mr Dole took the first steps towards forming a brains' trust of economists to direct him away from his obsession with balanced budgets towards a more broadly based policy that addressed some of the longer-term weaknesses in the economy.

The six wise men — pointy heads, as some commentators unkindly called them — were brought together in the Capitol conference room, under the auspices of Senate budget committee chairman Pete Domenici.

It was an eclectic group, which included the Nobel prize-winning economist Gary Becker, who has taken over Professor Milton Friedman's seat at the University of Chicago; Harvard's Martin Feldstein, who served as chairman of President Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers; John Lipsky, the tall, thoughtful market economist at Salomon Brothers, and Professor John Taylor of Stanford University,



the informal chairman and note-taker of the group.

What was remarkable, given the different backgrounds of the economists present, was the degree of consensus among them on what is needed to spur further growth. "We were basically a bunch of economists all heading in the same direction," said Mr Lipsky. The themes, which focused on tax reform, were not shocking, he observes. "What would have been radical is if we had considered the current tax system a model of efficiency and logic," he argues.

What emerged, according to another participant, Mr Feldstein, was a "menu of options" from which the Republican candidate, working with his political advisers, could choose.

The remarkable aspect from Mr Dole's point of view is that all the ideas were tax-related. Among the most radical discussed was wholesale tax reform, which would move the US to a more European model in which direct taxes on income were partly replaced by a consumer tax, such as value-added tax. This was seen as a valid approach in an economy in which the taxes on capital (such as double taxation of corporations) are among the highest in the Western world. But it was considered too contentious for the voters in 1996, though it may form part of a future Republican programme.

The group instead came up with a more conventional set of ideas. These included:

❑ Income tax cuts, not dissimilar to President Reagan's historic move in 1982. It was argued that this would compensate workers for slow wage growth in recent years;
❑ Reducing capital gains taxes, or indexing them to inflation, to lower the cost of capital and stimulate private investment — one of the most serious longer-term deficiencies of the US economy;
❑ The creation of "personal security savings accounts", similar to UK Peps, to allow individuals to shelter savings from tax, without having to wait for retirement to enjoy them;
❑ Additional accounts to allow Americans to save money, tax-free, for education expenses and medical care. This may be accompanied by matching federal funds for those on lower incomes who choose to take this route;
❑ A tax incentive for families by excluding from taxation part of the income in households with two earners.

Most of these ideas — with the exception of a switch to a consumption tax by the millennium — may seem unexceptional. But in the hands of Mr Dole, with his fixation on the balanced budget, they are potentially explosive, requiring a Pauline-style conversion to supply-side economics — renamed for these purposes "growth economics". In language reminiscent of the Reagan era, those advising Mr Dole in favour of the programme believe it could be self-financing.

Extra revenues of some $90 billion a year could be generated, effectively wiping out the deficit, if the economy could be restored to trend US growth of 3.3 per cent, in the view of conservative economist Gary Robbins, of the Institute for Policy Innovation. Mr Robbins, an adviser to Capitol Hill Republicans, argues that slower growth since 1989 has cost citizens $1,337 in income per year.

So far, Mr Dole has not decided which of the reforms to back. But the Clinton team is already sharpening its stiletto. "We can't afford to go the voodoo economics route again," says White House economic adviser Martin Baily. "Dole has a history of being more responsible."

But, as the struggle for Mr Dole's soul intensifies, with advisers urging him to put clear blue water between himself and President Clinton, déjà-voodoo becomes a serious prospect.

In Brief

EXXON Corp has been awarded $250 million in compensation for money it spent cleaning up after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska. A Texas jury voted 11-1 that Lloyd's of London and about 250 other underwriters should honour a policy that covered Exxon as owner of the oil.

BRITISH Telecom and its US partner MCI have stolen a march on their rivals by unveiling the world's biggest Internet network, set to bring in $2 billion a year by the end of the century.

COMPUTER group NEC is combining its PC operations outside Japan with Packard Bell of the US to form the world's fourth-largest manufacturer.

UK mortgage rates fell to their lowest levels since the mid-1960s after the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, ambushed the City with the fourth cut in base rates in six months.

BRITISH Airways and American Airlines are expected to announce plans to establish a wide-ranging booking and marketing alliance which has already provoked threats of open warfare from their rivals.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates June 10	Sterling rates June 3
Australia	1.9297-1.9316	1.9321-1.9341
Austria	16.54-16.56	16.83-16.86
Belgium	48.36-48.43	48.60-48.63
Canada	2.0875-2.0891	2.1208-2.1212
Denmark	9.07-9.08	9.12-9.13
France	7.96-7.97	8.00-8.01
Germany	2.3512-2.3528	2.3641-2.3659
Hong Kong	11.84-11.86	11.98-11.99
Ireland	0.9729-0.9745	0.9757-0.9774
Italy	2,374-2,377	2,380-2,382
Japan	166.96-167.13	167.66-167.85
Netherlands	2.6318-2.6344	2.6476-2.6494
New Zealand	2.2732-2.2766	2.2739-2.2771
Norway	10.04-10.06	10.10-10.11
Portugal	242.36-242.61	243.86-244.06
Spain	198.37-198.63	198.92-199.08
Sweden	10.32-10.34	10.38-10.40
Switzerland	1.9392-1.9411	1.9346-1.9364
USA	1.5310-1.5316	1.5490-1.5496
ECU	1.2432-1.2442	1.2490-1.2495

FTSE 100 share index down 10.4 at [illegible]. FTSE 250 index down [illegible] at 4462.[illegible]. Gold down [illegible]

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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The Washington Post

Clinton Gambles on Aid for North Korea

R. Jeffrey Smith

BY DECIDING to provide more food aid to North Korea, the Clinton administration is gambling that it can sell the American public on the merits of making a humanitarian gesture to malnourished people, even though they live under one of the world's least friendly regimes.

The decision represents an unusual diplomatic effort because recent visitors to North Korea — a notably repressive and economically backward country — report widespread food shortages but no starvation or related disease. They also report no sign of imminent domestic upheaval or preparations for military action that could threaten nearby U.S. forces or allies.

As a result, officials say the administration's decision, which President Clinton formalized last week by signing a detailed plan, arises not so much out of a terrible crisis as an expectation that matters can only get worse, with possible consequences that cannot be clearly forecast.

At worst, U.S. officials say, North Korea's Communist leaders might use their ample arsenal of guns and missiles to distract the populace in the midst of famine by provoking a war with neighboring South Korea. Or perhaps a hungry military unit or two, or a few thousand starving citizens, might try to defect to the south, provoking a tense argument between these countries about what to do with the refugees.

These scenarios remain, for now, just hypotheses about how the food shortage might spin out of control. That makes the administration's plan either an unnecessary and excessively generous gesture to what America views as a "rogue" nation, or an unusually far-sighted, non-traditional plan of action by U.S. diplomats to forestall a crisis before it actually erupts in a distant but highly important region.

Lining up for aid . . . North Korean farmers in Unpa country, 90 miles south of Pyongyang, waiting last month to receive Red Cross supplies of rice and vegetable oil

To presumptive Republican presidential nominee Robert Dole, it falls clearly into the former category. He denounced the plan last week as an unwarranted subsidy for "a country that devotes its own resources to the appetite of an insatiable military," including a burgeoning ballistic missile program, not to mention the millions it spends on its extensive internal propaganda machine.

Seeking to make a broader point about what he claims is foreign policy ineptness at the White House, Dole said the decision reflected inconsistency and "misallocation of resources" because the administration had decided against such aid as recently as last month. He also said it amounted to rewarding an enemy of the United States "with no reciprocal action on the part of Asia's most dangerous regime."

But the White House, anticipating Dole's critical remarks, has devised some protective political cover for itself. Unlike Washington's unilateral decision to give North Korea $2 million in food assistance last February, which came at a time when Japan and South Korea were publicly advising that such assistance was not warranted, this decision is to be announced in conjunction with similar pledges of additional aid by those two allies.

Washington had to do some persuading to get South Korea to sign up, because the last time Seoul provided food aid it got in return the back of North Korea's hand. But South Korea, like Washington, wants to ensure that North Korea forges closer ties with the outside world so that, as the nation's economy implodes, the country will come in for what specialists refer to as a "soft landing." An economic slowdown in a climate of suspicion and hostility might lead to war, they fear.

China Criticized for Nuclear Weapon Test

Steven Mufson in Beijing

CHINA conducted a nuclear weapon test at the weekend and said it will detonate another device before joining an international moratorium on further tests in September.

China is the only one of the five declared nuclear powers not already observing the moratorium, and the latest in a series of Chinese tests drew a chorus of criticism from foreign governments urging China to abandon its plans for another blast.

The underground explosion came just 20 days before the deadline for completion of a comprehensive treaty banning all future tests, and some foreign governments said the blast undermined the credibility of the Chinese efforts to reach an accord at negotiations in Geneva. On Thursday last week, China said it would no longer insist on being able to conduct "peaceful nuclear explosions."

The White House said it "deeply regrets" China's test, news services reported. "We urge China to refrain from further nuclear tests and to join in a global moratorium," press secretary Mike McCurry said in a statement issued by the White House.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard said: "It is particularly regrettable that China continues to test when the negotiations for a comprehensive test ban treaty are at a critical juncture."

Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto told reporters in Tokyo he was "very disappointed" adding, "I hope there will be no more tests."

China has conducted 44 nuclear tests since 1964, and the latest one, at its Lop Nur test site in northwestern Xinjiang province, created a shock that registered 5.7 on the Richter scale, Australian seismologists reported. The bomb had an estimated yield of 20 to 80 kilotons, making it a middle-range explosion, the Australian Seismological Center and the Australian Geological Survey Organization said. The bomb the United States dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945 was about 12.5 kilotons.

China's Foreign Ministry said China had exercised the "utmost restraint" in conducting nuclear tests. "The number of tests is extremely limited," it said in a statement released through the state-run New China News Agency. The Ministry said that the test was aimed at ensuring the safety of its nuclear arsenal: "For the purpose of the supreme interests of the state and the nation, China cannot but conduct the necessary and the minimum number of nuclear tests."

But Western diplomats believe China is rushing to finish tests that would help it develop missiles capable of carrying more than one nuclear warhead at a time, a capability the United States and other nuclear powers already possess.

China insists it has far fewer nuclear weapons and has conducted fewer tests than other countries. It is believed to have about 250 to 300 nuclear warheads. The Foreign Ministry said that the weapons are "solely for the purpose of self-defense" and reiterated China's stated opposition to first use of nuclear weapons.

The test and announcement come two days after China said it would "temporarily" drop its insistence on nuclear tests for what it called peaceful uses, leaving open the possibility of revisiting the issue in 10 years. No other country asserts nuclear devices could have any peaceful use, and there is no way to tell whether a test is being conducted for military or nonmilitary purposes.

China's change in position removed one stumbling block to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty being negotiated in Geneva, due to be signed in September at the United Nations and then ratified by individual governments.

But wrangling is continuing over China's reluctance to allow on-site inspections to ensure compliance with the treaty. China has expressed concern that inspections would compromise its national security. But American negotiators have argued that such inspections are needed to ensure compliance.

Though China complained about the intrusiveness of inspection methods, Damon Moglen, a Hong Kong-based spokesman for the anti-nuclear group Greenpeace, said that the measures "need to be intrusive enough so that all parties feel the treaty will be abided to. The treaty shouldn't provide means for one country to spy on another, but it has to provide a means for the treaty to be solid enough to be genuine."

Greenpeace's boat, the MV Greenpeace, set sail from Manila at the weekend to protest against China's nuclear tests and should arrive off China early next week.

White House Apology Over FBI Reports

George Lardner and John F. Harris

PRESIDENTIAL chief of staff Leon Panetta apologized at the weekend for the White House's inspection in 1993 of FBI background reports on former White House pass-holders, including many prominent Republicans, but denied the information was "improperly used."

"Obviously a mistake was made. It's inexcusable," Panetta told reporters on Air Force One on a campaign trip to the West with President Clinton. "We do owe an apology to those involved."

Asked about the apology, Clinton stated: "I completely support what he [Panetta] said." He called the episode "a completely honest bureaucratic snafu" that occurred "when we were trying to straighten out who should get security clearances to come to the White House."

Republicans welcomed the apology but said too many questions remain unanswered to accept the White House's explanations to date.

White House officials initially said last week that there was no evidence that any of the improperly obtained files had been examined, but the investigator who requested and obtained them said he reviewed the files for "derogatory information" that might pose a security problem.

"I think we ought to have hearings," House Majority Leader Richard K. Armey, R-Texas, said on ABC's This Week With David Brinkley. "What business did they have nosing around in files on people who had long since left the White House when we know they weren't even getting their own people properly cleared?"

FBI files on more than 330 people were collected by the Clinton White House in the latter half of 1993 even though they were not employed at the White House at the time. Among them were former Secretary of State James Baker III and Tony Blankley, the press secretary to now House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Georgia. Many had not worked at the White House for years.

The White House has said the improperly collected files were returned to the FBI after senior officials learned of their existence last week. Panetta, who first voiced the White House apology on NBC's Meet The Press, said procedures have been changed to "ensure that nothing like that will happen again."

Anthony Marceca, an Army civilian investigator detailed to the White House personnel office in late 1993 and early 1994, said he looked through the files when clearing up a backlog of security work. He based his file requests to the FBI on Secret Service lists of White House pass-holders and thought that many Republicans from previous administrations still had valid White House passes and that it was appropriate to obtain their FBI background files. Marceca said he read the files and notified Craig Livingstone, head of the White House personnel security office, of a few that contained "derogatory information," but added that most of the files had no such details and went straight to a White House vault.

Can a Free Internet Endure?

The noncommercial ethic of the superhighway is in danger from business, writes **Robert Kuttner**

AS THE Net proliferates, a showdown keeps being deferred — between its current incarnation in which information is largely free, and a seemingly inevitable world where users must pay. But even as purveyors keep laying plans to exploit the Net's commercial potential, more and more information keeps coming available, free.

Since the Net's inception, a fiercely held noncommercial ethic has taken root. Information, once produced, costs virtually nothing to disseminate electronically. Beyond the cost of paying access charges, users have grown accustomed to receiving information as a public good. The philosophers of the Net are cyber-Diggers. Like those early English egalitarians, they champion free use and equal access.

Of course, it costs something to produce information. But until now, the producer has willingly subsidized the consumer for a blend of high-minded and self-serving reasons.

Purveyors have been willing to give information away, either because they are committed to free dissemination of ideas (libraries, universities, researchers, individual Net-heads) or because they calculated that the publicity value justified the cost (political groups, corporations, publishers). The Net is another form of marketing.

A loss leader, however, is worth the cost only if it generates other business or income. Today, there is such a glut of information on the Net that nobody knows for certain whether this form of marketing is a good investment. For the moment the consumer is still king.

A handful of Internet publishers have begun charging. The Wall Street Journal, with a cornucopia of data on financial markets and corporations, initially gave it away but now charges a yearly fee. Microsoft's yet-to-be unveiled virtual magazine, Slate, at first was conceived as a free service to attract paying customers to Microsoft's proprietary Network, but the latest plan is to sell subscriptions.

As businesses try to derive revenue from the Internet, there is also more direct marketing of merchandise, and even junk e-mail. But this process has been slow to take off because credit card transactions on the Net are not yet secure.

Though paid ads are also sprouting on Internet "web sites," they seem alien appendages. While they invite the user to click for more information, it is not clear that they are attracting many customers. It is too easy to simply ignore them. And, reportedly, software is being developed that will screen ads out.

As my colleague Paul Starr observes, the closest parallel to the fight for the shape of the Net was the evolution of radio in the 1920s. When radio burst on the scene in 1921 and 1922, it was not at all clear whether it would be dominated by amateur users (who, along with the military, pioneered it) or whether it would be controlled by professional broadcasters.

The amateur radio operator, with his own low-power station, was the 1920s equivalent of the individual offering an Internet "home page." Nor was it clear, once professional broadcasters began obtaining licenses, whether stations would be noncommercial services or underwritten by corporate sponsors.

After a few years of confusion, commercial broadcasters demonstrated that they could attract mass audiences by designing attractive programming, and then selling the audiences to commercial sponsors. This mostly drove out noncommercial broadcasting until government helped revive public broadcasting in the 1960s.

In Britain, however, public policy went the other way. Broadcasting remained noncommercial (and many would say, of higher quality), until commercial competitors were allowed in during the 1970s.

It may be that large corporations will gain control of the Internet by using their resources and market power to deliver a better product, for which they can either charge users or attract advertisers. Alternatively, it may be that the Net has already put down sufficiently deep roots to resist total commercialization.

There are just too many people eager to use the Net as a free bulletin board. Purveyors of paid services will have to be clever indeed to entirely drive out those free services.

Inevitably, as credit card rip-offs, plagiarism, junk e-mail and other commercial abuses proliferate, we will also need some form of public regulation, if only to set ground rules and direct traffic. Either way, we will likely look back on the benign anarchy of the Internet in its first decade as a more innocent time, when minnows swam with whales and it was all free.

The Panama Hat's Heady Days Are Over

Gabriel Escobar
in Cuenca, Ecuador

"THE FUTURE of the hat?" Homero Ortega caresses the wild strands of an unfinished Panama, measures the brim with a small wooden ruler and then quietly repeats the question, almost defying himself to answer. "With God's help," he says at last, "we can pass this on from my children to my grandchildren."

If the chaos that defines Monday mornings at Homero Ortega Father & Sons were the barometer of his business, the 80-year-old hat impresario would have nothing to worry about. Dozens of Panamas have just been brought down from the mountain villages where poor weavers turn palm fronds into this sartorial classic, and in the courtyard out back, rows and rows of hats drying in the sun look like an exotic crop waiting for harvest.

But here, in this southern colonial town that gave the world the Panama hat, the elegant sombrero is at a crossroads. Ortega and many of the nearly two dozen other exporters are trying to recover from one of the worst years in recent memory, and the industry as a whole is facing challenges that stand to redefine the future of the hat. Despite a name that still irks many here — Americans passing through Panama bought them and assumed they were local — the distinctive straw hats with the black band are Ecuador's contribution to fashion and a source of national pride.

What is happening now is a far cry from the heady days of the 1940s and '50s, when worldwide demand for the Panama hat made an international industry out of what remains, to this day, an intricate Indian weave that dates back centuries.

What has changed, however, is the market and the competition. Until recently, the Panama hat had always been able to fend off an assault by synthetic sombreros from Asia because those upstarts were visibly poor imitations, cheap paper products that paled in comparison with the real thing.

But as last year's sales again confirmed, the industry has effectively lost the profitable bottom end of the market to a new generation of synthetics, hats so similar in texture that they fool Cuenca's connoisseurs.

Worse yet, the weavers who are the lifeblood of the hat are dwindling in number. A new wave of migration from the region bodes ill for an industry that relies on passing a tradition from one generation to another. Maria Leonor Aguilar, who wrote a study on the hat industry here, says money sent from abroad by relatives often eliminates the financial incentive to weave, creating another problem in the chain of supply.

Sales in 1995 dropped to $675,000, a dramatic reduction from a recent high of $1.4 million in 1991, and that sent Ortega and other hat exporters scrambling for new markets. To make matters worse, Mexico's financial collapse severely affected Ortega because almost 70 percent of his business was with Mexican companies.

Competing with the Asians is extremely difficult for economic reasons. At Serrano Hat Export Ltd., marketing director Fernando Moreno Serrano whips out a calculator and explains. The best glazed paper hats from Asia go for $80 a dozen, compared with about $250 for the same number of run-of-the-mill Panamas. The real thing takes time to make, and no exporter here can guarantee more than 3,000 dozen a week, a fraction of what the Asian markets are capable of producing.

Then there is the price. Moreno says the firm's once profitable cowboy line has shrunk over the years, and now just one or two hats in the American catalogues are made of natural fiber. "Cowboys don't spend $300 to $500 for a hat," said Moreno. "For that they can buy five different kinds made of paper, and the weave is almost identical."

Ortega, for one, believes that the answer lies in the high-end market. The firm is working with a New York-based hat designer, Andrea Stuart, who spent two months here training Ortega's workers to produce a new line. Her summer hats, which average about $70 apiece, are now on the shelves in predictable places: East Hampton, Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard.

The Panama hat — yes, even Ecuadorans have had to accept the name — has always been peasant gear. That was the case even before Jose Maria Cobos, a missionary who arrived with the Spanish conquistadors, spotted the strange headgear on the natives and dismissed it as a bizarre custom.

And in the end, this tradition will always ensure at least a small market on the home front, Seventh Avenue or not. "The hat has always been associated with people of modest means," said Aguilar. "Why? Because the peasant has to protect himself, and he will continue to use it."

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Just Another Kind of Slavery

David Guy

THE LAST OF THE SAVAGES
By Jay McInerney
Knopf. 320pp. $24

THE LAST Of The Savages tells the classic story of two friends who come together in their youth and influence each other for the rest of their lives. Patrick Keane and Will Savage meet in 1965 as juniors and new boys at a posh New England prep school. Patrick, the novel's narrator, is the son of an appliance salesman, apprehensive about entering this new world, vaguely embarrassed by his plebeian parents. Will is not the first Savage to have attended the school, and acts from the start as if he owns the place. But the most interesting and characteristic fact about him is that he hails from Memphis.

It isn't long before Patrick is heading South to meet the Savage clan. Will's younger brother A.J. died in a hunting accident the year before, and the whole family feels mournful and full of blame, even Will, who was supposed to have been on the trip instead of his brother. His father is a right-wing businessman who is seriously estranged from his son but feels an immediate affection for Patrick, whose ambitions are more like his own.

Will isn't just straining at the father-son relationship but at his whole background, the oppressiveness of American society in general. "Free the slaves" is his byword, and he is referring not just to African Americans but anyone snared in the system.

He does love black music, the blues in particular — "It's like the distilled essence of suffering and the yearning to be free" — and it isn't long before he is dragging Patrick to juke joints, introducing him to booze and drugs, speaking of his ambitions to work in the music business. For the time being, he is running a branch of the numbers game with a black man who had once worked with his father, taking calls from a pay phone at prep school. He is a troubled young man but bold and original.

All this sounds like a story that has been told before — the uptight young plebeian and his wealthy rebellious friend — but Jay McInerney tells it at so brisk a pace, and with such beautifully observed detail, that he makes it new. McInerney burst upon the literary scene with Bright Lights Big City (a deeper and more moving novel than it was ever given credit for) and is emerging in his fifth novel as one of the solid chroniclers of his time.

The Last Of The Savages is especially interesting because of the place in which it is set. Memphis is not only a center for the music Will loves but the site of one of the seminal events of the day, the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Will at that point is living in Memphis with a black wife, an act as bold as it is foolhardy. Patrick — in one of the novel's mild ironies — is at Yale with a black roommate whose ambition, it seems, is to be white. "I'm not a big fan of folk art," he says of the blues. "All that raw unmediated emotion."

McInerney beautifully captures such ironies of the times. This was a moment when a Yale student government meeting could be crashed by a group of Black Panthers — "In the name of the people I hereby declare this meeting adjourned"; when an honors thesis could be turned down for suggesting that a group of slaves didn't lead a rebellion but were the victims of white paranoia, when the now-portly and prosperous Will, a successful music mogul, is insulted because Patrick won't do a line of coke. "Here I invite you to my party and you won't accept my hospitality."

The sexual attraction between the two men, a buried subtext in most such stories, is openly addressed in this one. We watch Patrick's libido develop at a snail's pace, and by the time one of his women friends points this out — "He can't get it up for white girls and you can't get it up for any girls" — we are as exasperated as she. It isn't until the end of the novel that our narrator speaks more openly and reveals how much he has given up to become a high-priced New York attorney.

The college generation that McInerney is describing happens to be my own. We thought that we were in the midst of a political revolution and a change in human consciousness and were astonished to see how quickly it all disappeared. The Last Of The Savages closes with Patrick as a stodgy lawyer, afraid to live out his real life, Will an over-the-hill music producer, worn out by the times, perhaps, but also by his own bravado and hubris. It is a sad story, but it rings true. We thought in those days that we were finding freedom, but it was just another kind of slavery.

Broadway Threnody

Terry Teachout

SPEAK LOW (WHEN YOU SPEAK LOVE)
The Letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya
Edited and translated from the German by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke
University of California Press. 628pp. $39.95

KURT WEILL, the composer of The Threepenny Opera, didn't invent crossover music — that distinction belongs to George Gershwin — but he was one of its earliest and most successful practitioners. Trained as a classical musician, he turned his hand in the '20s to the making of a series of left-wing musical-theater pieces, most of them written with the poet-librettist-thug Bertolt Brecht, that summed up Weimar Germany in much the same way Aaron Copland's Billy The Kid summed up America in the '30s. When the Nazis forced Weill to run for his life (his jazz-flavored music was considered even more scandalous than his Jewish blood), he moved to the United States, retooled his style and became a writer of hugely popular Broadway musicals, turning out such standards as "Speak Low," "My Ship" and "September Song" for such stars as Mary Martin, Gertrude Lawrence and Walter Huston.

In 1926, Weill married Lotte Lenya, a Viennese prostitute turned singer-actress. Lenya subsequently became the chief interpreter of her husband's music, making matchlessly vivid recordings in the '50s of most of his German language theater pieces, and appearing in an off-Broadway production of The Threepenny Opera that ran for 2,611 consecutive performances. Lenya outlived Weill by 31 years, in time becoming something of a pop-culture icon: She recorded with Louis Armstrong; acted in the Broadway version of Cabaret and appeared opposite Sean Connery in a James Bond movie, From Russia With Love.

The Weills' marriage was more of an artistic collaboration than a love match ("When I feel this longing for you," Weill wrote Lenya in 1926, "I most of all think of the sound of your voice, which I love like a very force of nature, like an element"), and it was, to put it mildly, open all night. Weill and Lenya divorced in 1933, reconciled in 1935, remarried in 1937 and stayed together (or, to be exact, stayed married) until Weill's death in 1950; throughout this time, both partners led aggressive extramarital sex lives, though Weill seems to have enjoyed his rather more than Lenya did hers.

Such marriages may be hard on the soul, but they're great for scholarship: Weill and Lenya regularly sent each other letters on the not-infrequent occasions when they were in different places. Their correspondence, much of which survives, has now been collected and edited, and the German-language letters translated by Lys Symonette and Kim H. Kowalke. Symonette was Weill's musical assistant and Lenya's accompanist; Kowalke is a noted Weill scholar. Between them, they have produced a volume of the highest possible importance for anyone interested in Kurt Weill's music — and, not at all incidentally, an extraordinarily colorful narrative about two difficult people who needed each other very much, but never quite figured out how to get along.

Symonette and Kowalke have linked the 393 letters in this volume with extensive yet readable notes that make it possible to read Speak Low straight through, just like a really good biography. One or two of their facts are askew — I have the impression that they know more about Brecht than Broadway — but the errors in the second half of the book, though irritating, are both infrequent and minor. All in all, I can't think of a better-edited volume of musical letters, or a more entertaining one.

For sheer gossip value, in fact, Speak Low is hard to beat: Weill and Lenya were both vain and jealous, knew everybody and liked to tell tales out of school.

Musically speaking, though, the most important thing about Speak Low is the way in which it dramatizes the continuity between Weill's collaborations with Brecht and his later work for Broadway. It was long fashionable to dismiss the Broadway musicals as hack work; it is now fashionable to overpraise them. But whatever one thinks of Lady In The Dark, One Touch Of Venus, Street Scene and Lost In The Stars, it is clear from reading Speak Low that Weill himself took these shows every bit as seriously as The Threepenny Opera or The Rise And Fall Of The City Of Mahagonny. (Interested readers of Speak Low should make a point of seeking out Pearl Records' "Kurt Weill: From Berlin to Broadway," a recently issued two-CD anthology of original-cast material recorded between 1928 and 1943, which makes the point even more forcefully.)



Kurt Weill, as photographed by Karsh of Ottawa

Considered solely as a human drama, of course, the Weill-Lenya marriage was the stuff of which novels are made, and Speak Low also sheds much light on this famously troubled relationship. The underlying problem seems plain enough: Weill was by far the greater artist, and Lenya was initially seen as little more than his loyal servant. Small wonder she sought revenge in a series of affairs that appear at first to have hurt him deeply. But two can play at adultery, and Weill's affairs certainly hurt Lenya even more deeply. (It is doubtless significant that all three of the men Lenya married after Weill's death were homosexual.) Marriages of convenience are rarely as convenient as they look, and it is impossible to put down Speak Low without recalling the bitter words of Clare Boothe Luce: "In every marriage, there are two marriages: his and hers. His is better."

Character-Forming Study

Beryl Lieff Benderly

I.D.
How Heredity and Experience Make You Who You Are
By Winifred Gallagher
Random House. 234pp. $23

EVERY few months, it seems, the media report on a new gene that is "tied" — as journalists rather vaguely phrase it — to some human characteristic or form of behavior. Recent years have yielded genetic features that purportedly relate to schizophrenia, alcoholism, homosexuality and, just this past winter, to "novelty-seeking." Such news confuses many ordinary readers or viewers, especially those old enough to remember that, mere decades ago, equally august experts, holding equally eminent chairs and doctorates, used to ascribe those same problematic features of human personality to shortcomings in toilet training or poor relationships with mother.

The old nature-nurture debate that for so long defined scientific investigations of human nature has clearly moved into a new phase. The mass media haven't always kept up with events, but sophisticated thinkers about human development no longer regard heredity and environment in the traditional ways, as adversarial forces or independent factors or numerical contributors. Now they seem more like partners inseparably locked in an endless, interactive dance.

The modern sciences of genetics, molecular biology and neuroscience, along with new work in psychology, have given researchers the tools to begin tracking human development's subtle moves and fascinating rhythms. And serious journalists like Winifred Gallagher have now begun bringing the word to perplexed general readers. Her book's subtitle neatly encapsulates the new thinking: "How heredity and experience make you who you are."

Character may be rather hard to tie to genetics, but a particular pattern of stimulus reaction is not. Genes, after all, are code for protein molecules, not for traits or behavioral characteristics. An individual's genetic makeup, along with his intrauterine experience, thus produces a nervous system with particular, and quite individual characteristics. Some of us thus arrive more sensitive to sound or light or touch and others less so. Some have more ability to sort out the relevant stimuli in chaotic situations, and others less.

Such inborn dispositions, Gallagher illustrates, both respond to and shape the individual's experience from the moment of birth onward. A crabby, irritable baby, who generally garners less affectionate attention than a cheerful infant, often has a sensitive nervous system that registers kitchy-cooing or rocking as harsh, painful, or even scary. The sunny baby isn't "nicer" than the grouchy one; rather, she's probably blessed with a nervous system that experiences lullabies and tickles and coos as pleasurable.

Not only do a child's reactions mold his environment, however; his experience also alters his nervous system. Clear evidence indicates that the kind of care and stimulation received by the young of many species affects the number and organization of brain cells. The influence of neither dancing partner can be ignored. To illustrate how complicated the partnership can be, Gallagher builds her book around a case study tracked for more than 40 years. The woman known to science as Monica faced in infancy, truly daunting environmental and innate challenges, but overcame them through sheer force of personality.

Along the way, Gallagher provides a thorough and thoughtful review of how scientific thinking has evolved over Monica's lifetime. In the Freudian '50s, doctors worried that the unorthodox form of feeding required by Monica's birth defect would irreparably stunt her psychic development. In the neuroscientific 1990s, they speculate about whether Prozac changes basic personality or only behavior. Gallagher's examples and illustrations come not only from interviews with many of the field's leading thinkers, but also from literature, film, theater and television.

An overly elliptical prose style and a somewhat casual attitude toward reference information occasionally renders ideas and information less clear than they should be. On balance, though, Gallagher has taken a difficult, contentious and often poorly reported body of research material and rendered it intriguing and understandable.

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Vietnam seeks to balance north and south

Jean-Claude Pomonti in Hanoi

THE VIETNAMESE capital, Hanoi, plans to build a ring of six residential and industrial satellite towns round the city within the next 10 years. The aim is to preserve Hanoi's heritage and ease overcrowding in the old town, where the average living space per inhabitant is now only 4 square metres. But another even more important goal is to ensure that the north, where half of Vietnam's population of 75 million lives, grows as fast as the south.

Historically, the conquest of southern Vietnam took place relatively recently (in the 17th and 18th centuries). It explains the country's curious S shape, which extends over a distance of 2,000km from the Chinese border to Cape Ca Mau, its southernmost point.

The parallel development of those two regions is an absolute precondition for balanced growth. But economic reform and the opening up of the country to foreign investment in 1988 mainly benefited the south, which is richer, more enterprising and, above all, less overcrowded.

Vu Huy Hoang, who is in charge of foreign investment at the planning ministry, says that since 1988 50 per cent of foreign investment has gone to the south, 15 per cent to the centre, and 35 per cent to the north, though the balance began to be redressed in 1992, with the result that the proportion now going to the north is 40 per cent.

Four-fifths of that 40 per cent is concentrated in the "growth triangle" formed by the region of Hanoi, the port of Haiphong and the coastal province of Quang Ninh, which borders China.

Since 1993 the annual growth rate of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam's fastest-growing city, has been about 15 per cent. The annual income per inhabitant there is now about $900, or almost three times the national average. The city attracts a deprived rural population, particularly that of central Vietnam (10 million inhabitants), where the construction of a development area in the region of Da Nang has fallen behind schedule.



Mighty crowded . . . Development around Hanoi is aimed at avoiding the fate of Ho Chi Minh City (above), where the population is growing by around 15 per cent every year PHOTOGRAPH: ALI PACZENSKY

Hanoi, where the population density exceeds 1,000 inhabitants per square kilometre, does not want to suffer the same fate as Ho Chi Minh City. The aim of the satellite towns and industrial sites now being built is to prevent a drift from the land. Suburban residential districts will ease overcrowding in the old town by offering each inhabitant, 40sq m. Strict steps have already been taken to send peasants without residence permits back to their villages.

Nguyen Do Khue, head of co-operation and foreign investment on Hanoi's People's Committee, says that since 1990 the Hanoi region has grown at a rate of 11-14 per cent and its income per inhabitant has more than doubled to $650, or twice the national average. In the northern "growth triangle", a good third of the $3.5 billion of approved foreign investment has already been carried out.

Between now and 2000 the Hanoi region will have to invest a further $6 billion, half of it foreign, to double its inhabitants' standard of living once again. That will require the annual growth rate to rise to 12-15 per cent, a target Khue regards as realistic.

That investment will form part of an overall package of $40 billion, half of it from abroad, which Vietnam thinks it will need by 2000 if it is to maintain its 1995 growth rate of 9.5 per cent — an aim the World Bank regards as "ambitious but attainable".

Whatever happens, Vietnam cannot afford to ignore its big Chinese neighbour or allow the north to lag too far behind. To feed the population there, the government is already having to tap grain reserves in the south.

The successful development of the Hanoi-Haiphong region, which has got off to a flying start, will play a vital role in preventing internal regional disparities, whose political consequences could be disastrous.

(June 5)

Austrians quick to blame Brussels for economic ills

Waltraud Baryli in Vienna

A SERIES of factors — Austria's gloomy economic prospects, public rows within the ruling coalition over European policy, and the "mad cow" crisis — have caused a sudden surge in Euroscepticism four months away from Austria's first participation in European parliamentary elections, on October 13.

Hard hit by the austerity programme adopted by the government in a bid to put the country's finances on an even keel, the Austrians feel they got a raw deal out of joining the European Union in January 1995.

Most Austrians blame European integration for the mini-recession that has swept the country. Economists, on the other hand, tend to interpret it as the inevitable result of the downturn in the German economy — Bonn is easily Austria's biggest trading partner, taking more than 40 per cent of Vienna's trade.

The fact that the 1996 growth forecast has been revised downwards to 0.7 per cent has only aggravated an economic climate already depressed by the government's drastic savings package (of about $1 billion) aimed at trimming Austria's deficit to 3 per cent by 1997, the year that will serve as a reference for countries wishing to engage in economic and monetary union.

Matters have not been helped by dwindling tourism and rising unemployment, although the latter is still low — 6.6 per cent of the population of working age, but only 3.9 per cent according to EU criteria.

Companies want to improve productivity, but are hamstrung by a strong currency and excessively high production costs. They are therefore tempted to relocate production facilities in the neighbouring countries of eastern Europe.

But the employers' federation is currently engaged in a "dialogue of the deaf" with the trade unions as it attempts to engineer a 20 per cent cut in labour costs over the next five years with the help of a two-year wage freeze, more flexible working hours and the lifting of restrictions on store opening times.

Industry expects its payroll to fall by a further 5 per cent in 1996. Economists predict that the wave of business failures that resulted in some 5,000 companies going under in 1995 may gather further momentum this year.

Against this background of crisis, Eurosceptics systematically denigrate Europe. Jörg Haider, leader of the nationalist right, has been having a field day laying into the Brussels "Eurocrats". He has called for Austria's EU contribution to be renegotiated (he thinks it is too high) and campaigned for a referendum on a single currency. He is expected to harp on the same anti-Brussels and anti-Maastricht themes during this autumn's election campaign.

The two parties making up the ruling coalition, the Social Democrats and the conservative People's Party, know they may suffer a drubbing at the polls. They have responded to that risk by making concessions to the Eurosceptic camp: upping the ante in areas where they have clashed with Brussels, such as anonymous savings accounts and higher motorway tolls for freight-carrying vehicles.

But one leading pollster believes that any attempt to turn the EU into a "scapegoat" for unpopular decisions is only likely to "add fuel to the flames" in a way that is bound to benefit the anti-Europeans.

The political atmosphere has also been clouded by the inability of the two parties in the coalition to agree on a European security policy. The People's Party, which has the backing of most of the opposition, is in favour of Austria joining the Western European Union and Nato, whereas the Social Democrats still believe in maintaining Austria's neutral status.

The dispute is a constant source of polemic. The foreign minister, Wolfgang Schüssel, was recently attacked by the leader of the Social Democratic parliamentary group, Peter Kostelka, for pursuing "too pro-German a policy" and for having set up a veritable "Kohl-Schüssel axis", which resulted in his systematically toeing the German line on European matters.

Kostelka makes no secret of his wish to see Austria "seek alliances with the smaller countries" of the EU so as to counterbalance the "twin-engine of France and Germany", which is in danger of "turning other countries into satellites".

(June 1)

Is Paris City Hall awash with sleaze?

EDITORIAL

IS THE Paris City Hall a hotbed of corruption? That is the serious charge that has just been levelled at it by François Ciolina, a former head of the City of Paris Housing Authority (Opac). Ciolina is very much "one of the boys" — a high-ranking civil servant with degrees from two of France's most prestigious *grandes écoles*, Polytechnique and Ponts et Chaussées.

Backing up his claims with a wealth of detail, Ciolina told investigating magistrate Eric Halphen that public contracts were arranged for the benefit of slush funds set up by the neo-Gaullist party, the Rassemblement Pour La République (RPR). He also alleged that the scheme comprised a system of perks, such as improvements worth 1.5 million francs ($300,000) to an Opac flat earmarked for the son of Paris's mayor, Jean Tiberi.

The case is all the more regrettable because it could spill over well beyond its Paris context. President Jacques Chirac, a former RPR leader and mayor of the capital from 1977 to 1995, cannot avoid involvement. Nor can the prime minister, Alain Juppé, who was in charge of the capital's financial affairs when he was deputy-mayor, and several of his ministers, who cut their political teeth in the Hôtel de Ville's labyrinthine corridors of power.

As for Jacques Toubon, who is both mayor of the capital's 13th *arrondissement* and the justice minister, he is in the uncomfortable position of being both judge and judged. Will he instruct his ministry to stop systematically obstructing Halphen's investigation as it has done for the past two years?

If precedents are anything to go by, that looks unlikely. Whenever there has been a scandal, the director of public prosecutions has turned a deaf ear to demands for legal action.

The Socialists paid a heavy price when they took investigating magistrate Thierry Jean-Pierre off the Urba slush-fund case. The opposition then rightly pointed out that the position of Henri Nallet, who was both the justice minister and a former treasurer of François Mitterrand's presidential campaign, had become untenable.

Toubon is now in danger of finding himself in a similar predicament — unless, of course, he agrees to respect the law rather than behave like a party apparatchik, lets the courts get on with the job and shows he is determined to allow investigations currently under way to continue without any restrictions except those laid down by the code of criminal procedure. If he is an honourable man, that is the only course open to him.

(June 6)

Love song to the joys of shared artistry

Philippe Dagen

THE exhibition called Canto d'Amore, now on at the Kunstmuseum in Basle, is to be highly recommended — even if it has flaws — for it leaves the visitor in what can only be described as a state of utter bliss. There are two reasons for this: the extraordinary quality of most of the works on show, and the intelligence with which the exhibition helps one to apprehend and comprehend the nature of the relationship between painters and composers in the two decades after the first world war.

That is the exhibition's real subject, which is only elliptically suggested by its title, Canto d'Amore (borrowed from a painting by Giorgio de Chirico). The "love song" concerned is the one that composers dedicated to their painters, and painters to their composers.

According to its subtitle, the exhibition sets out to analyse the links between modernity and classicism in music and the fine arts between 1914 and 1935. Those links were constant, close and sometimes intimate.

The protagonists concerned included Pablo Picasso and Igor Stravinsky, De Chirico and Alfredo Casella, Paul Klee and Anton Webern, Georges Braque and Max Reger, Piet Mondrian and Paul Hindemith, Salvador Dali and Francis Poulenc, Max Beckmann and Richard Strauss, Juan Gris and Manuel de Falla. It would be hard to imagine a more glittering cast of artists and composers active in the first third of the 20th century.

The ties between them are examined from both a historical and an aesthetic standpoint. The exhibition focuses on the series of ballets and operas for which composers wrote scores, and painters designed sets and costumes.

In 1917, Picasso, Erik Satie and Jean Cocteau created the ballet Parade. Two years later, Picasso, De Falla and Sergei Diaghilev put on The Three-Cornered Hat, a comic ballet that tells the story of an elderly judge who tries to seduce a miller's young wife, goes about it in completely the wrong way, attempts to exploit his position of power and ends up being driven out of the village.

Picasso did a great number of gouache sketches for The Three-Cornered Hat. The costumes were based on historical tradition, with a few unauthentic borrowings from Italian comedy. The decor, on the other hand, consisted purely of an interplay of highly coloured triangular planes. The result was that characters dressed in old-fashoned clothes moved around in a Cubist space — a combination of opposites that reflected the deliberate diversity then characteristic of Picasso's painting.

The following year he was at it again, this time with Stravinsky and, once more, Diaghilev. Although they ran into difficulties and had rows, they managed to create Pulcinella, a congress of burlesque masks against the backdrop of an arcade and a quayside whose lines are as much in the spirit of De Chirico as of Cubism.

After the success of the première, Stravinsky remarked that Pulcinella was one of those very rare shows where everything hung together, and where all the elements — subject, music, choreography and sets — formed a homogeneous whole.

The same could be said of Casella's music and De Chirico's sets and costumes for the ballet The Jar, a remarkable example of what the art of quotation and pastiche can achieve.

Each of these ballets is the subject of a display which brings together preparatory sketches, original scores and a plot summary.

Correspondence exchanged by artists and one or two line portraits by Picasso and André Derain leave the visitor in no doubt that the years immediately following the first world war were remarkable for the degree of collaboration between the arts. It was a time of fruitful encounters and exchanges, of projects that easily found sponsors, and premières that delighted the public. And when the public and the critics were less enthusiastic, as in the case of Léonide Massine's 1924 ballet, Mercure, with music by Satie and sets by Picasso, André Breton was quick to denounce their pusillanimity in a petition signed by most Surrealists.

Yet if Canto d'Amore set out merely to celebrate those ideal alliances with a touch of nostalgia, it would be no more than a good, if somewhat flawed, show. Those who like their exhibitions to be exhaustive, could justifiably complain that there is no reference to Derain's



Canto d'Amore by Giorgio de Chirico, 1914

work in London after the 1918 armistice, or to La Création du Monde, which Fernand Léger put on with Rolf de Maré's Ballets Suédois with music by Darius Milhaud.

ON THE other hand, one cannot quite see the justification for including some laboured paintings by Amédée Ozenfant and Oskar Schlemmer, or a series of dull, bourgeois works turned out by Henri Matisse in Nice during the twenties, which round off the exhibition rather awkwardly.

But these are minor details. The organisers set out not to draw up an inventory, but to try to analyse a phenomenon. It is in this sense that the show is significant. They worked on the simple assumption that if painters and musicians collaborated so fruitfully it was probably because they shared the same, or at least similar, aesthetic ideas.

What were they? A subtle and ironical use of the past and a distanced form of neo-classicism, combined with a determination — apparently contradictory, but in fact not so — to explore new expressive styles. In other words, painters and composers integrated their feelings about the repertoire of the past with formal experimentation, and mixed tradition with modernity.

In his operas Ariadne Auf Naxos and Capriccio, Strauss dovetails different periods and styles, and works musical reminiscences into his score. In his painting Trois Femmes à la Fontaine (1921), Picasso manages to synthesise archaism, Jean Ingres and his own pre-Cubist painting, while leaving the interplay of influences fully visible.

As early as 1914, De Chirico combined in a single painting ancient masks, Quattrocento perspectives and mundane modern objects, which explains Guillaume Apollinaire's enthusiasm for his art.

All these works straddle the dividing line between learned recapitulation and revolutionary innovation. The watchword seems to have been: "Neither amnesia nor academicism." It certainly applies to both Stravinsky and Picasso, who together invented a deceptive form of neo-classicism.

Those with too simplistic a view of the history of aesthetic ideas argue that the period was above all governed by the notion of "a return to order". I beg to differ: instead of a return, there was constant to-ing and fro-ing; instead of order, a cleverly eclectic disorder.

The problem facing the organisers was how to put across, in a museum environment, an analysis of forms relative to both music and the fine arts. How was the visitor to experience the actuality of that cross-fertilisation? It would not have sufficed merely to display a few scores next to the pictures: paintings and drawings attract our attention so powerfully that we tend not to linger on the much-emended handwritten page, however rare it may be.

And the attraction is all the stronger in this case because some rooms in the exhibition achieve perfection, thanks to the reserves of the Basle Kunstmuseum itself and some first-class loans from Switzerland's inexhaustible private collections, as well as from French and American museums.

I am thinking in particular of the gallery of De Chirico self-portraits, Picasso's complete preliminary sketches for Trois Femmes à la Fontaine, and the full set of engravings known as the "Vollard series", a prime example of mixed genres and references.

The organisers solve the problem of how to juxtapose pictorial and musical compositions by fitting out a music room in the centre of the exhibition, in a gallery where Picasso still-lifes rub shoulders with sculptures by Jacques Lipchitz. A very simple system of recordings and headphones enables the visitor to listen to the works of Arthur Honegger, Arnold Schoenberg, Milhaud, Strauss and others.

But the most apt musical accompaniment to celebrate this marriage of modern painting and music is surely the discordant and rather strident ebullience of Casella's Scarlattiana, a work that is learned but never ponderous, at once experimental and tongue-in-cheek.

Canto d'Amore, Kunstmuseum, Basle, Switzerland. Closed Monday. Until August 11

(May 9)

Casts of thousands fall foul of customs

Harry Bellet

ON MAY 22, French customs intercepted 114 plaster casts and 32 reliefs by Hans Arp as they were being smuggled into Belgium. Arp is one of this century's greatest sculptors, and his works can sell for hundreds of thousands of dollars. What usually happens in such cases is that the works concerned are confiscated and end up in national collections. The European single market does not mean that works of art above a certain value are exempted from needing export permits.

About 500 such items are believed to be confiscated each year. In 1994, the Centre Pompidou's collections were enriched by the addition of a plaster cast by Arp and an exceptional set of 85 drawings from his personal collection — works by Wassily Kandinsky, Raoul Haussman, Viking Eggeling, Kurt Schwitters, Max Ernst, and Hans Richter.

The so-called "Arp affair" goes back to August 1988, when French customs stopped a lorry transporting more than 180 plaster casts from the Fondation Arp, in the Paris suburb of Clamart, to Rolaneseck near Bonn. The casts were described in the customs declaration as being "studies of little interest" and were let through. But three portfolios of drawings which did not feature in the declaration were seized.

The second episode of the affair came in March 1989. A work decribed as "a plaster work of little value" was seized as it crossed the border in the other direction. It was, in fact, the original plaster cast of Human Lunar Spectral, now in the Centre Pompidou, which was going to be used to cast a bronze in France.

In 1992 French customs managed to get the Arps that had slipped through the net in 1988 repatriated from Germany. From then on they were kept in storage. The casts intercepted 10 days ago are part of the same batch. Their owner, Johannes Wasmuth, a former concert organiser, was trying to export them back into Germany via Belgium.

Wasmuth was given the works by Arp's widow, who is now dead. After he had helped sort out her problems with the French tax authorities, she was so grateful that she gave him not only Arp's works and those of his first wife, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, but also all the relevant publication and reproduction rights.

Until 1988, the works had been on show at the Fondation Arp, in the artist's former studio in Clamart. But Wasmuth had other ambitions for them: he set up another foundation, the Stiftung Hans Arp/Taeuber-Arp, at Rolaneseck. A museum to house them is due to be built there by the New York architect Richard Meier with the help of subsidies to the tune of $3.3 million from the local authorities.

As he owns the rights to Arp's work, Wasmuth can make as many bronzes as he sees fit. The law says a bronze obtained from a plaster cast is an original work as long as the total number of such casts does not exceed 12. It was clearly in the interest of the Stiftung Hans Arp/Taeuber-Arp to gain possession of the plaster casts.

The French authorities are faced with a difficult problem. Unless evidence to the contrary emerges, Wasmuth is the legitimate owner of the works. If he had declared them in the proper way, the French culture minister might well have authorised their export to Germany.

That is why French customs did not, strictly speaking, seize them on May 22, but merely "stopped" them. A Valenciennes court has ruled that they should be held for such time as is necessary for valuers to do their job.

The point at issue is the value of the plaster casts. If they are valued at more than 50,000 ecus ($62,000) each, the lack of an export permit constitutes a customs offence and the works will go into a French collection. If they are worth less, they will continue on their journey.

Whatever the valuers' decision, the overall value of the plaster casts first exported in 1988 is bound to be in excess of the 68,000 francs ($13,000) declared by Wasmuth — unless they have been irremediably damaged by their travels, for, as every sculptor knows, plaster is fragile.

An artists' collective has demanded the return of the Arps to France on the grounds that they will be more at home in the studio designed by Taeuber-Arp in Clamart than in Meier's museum near Bonn.

(June 2/3)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani



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For years CNN was the only 24-hour TV news station. Now CBS, Murdoch and an NBC-Microsoft alliance want to muscle in, writes **Andrew Culf** in Atlanta

Global rush to be first with the news

THERE is a strong whiff of cordite in the air at CNN's headquarters in central Atlanta. Outside the network's 15-storey office block, which doubles as a luxury hotel and shopping mall, contractors work around the clock, digging trenches and putting the finishing touches to the city's Olympic Park. Inside the CNN Centre the network's executives sound as if they are in the trenches. Eason Jordan, senior vice-president of CNN International, is at battle stations: "These are exciting and challenging times. We face new competitive challenges around the world. CNN is gearing up for war."

Derided when it launched 16 years ago, CNN has an impressive head start in the international news business. But rival networks in the United States are now casting an envious eye over its achievements — and its transition into a highly profitable business at the heart of Ted Turner's burgeoning television empire.

While ABC has abandoned plans to launch its own 24-hour news service, there remains a potent threat from NBC, CBS and Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. "Murdoch feels it is appropriate to offer $10 for each household to get carriage of his news channel — we hope to be paid," says Jordan scornfully. "We will strengthen our brand and preserve it — but it is war . . . NBC, Murdoch, and CBS want to kill us."

Turner, not a man renowned for his diplomacy, was stung into riposte by Murdoch's allegations that CNN is too liberal (the News Corp chairman accused his rival of "brown-nosing dictators" — presumably meaning Fidel Castro — and of having "sold out to the establishment"). Last year he threatened to "squish Rupert like a bug". Now he observes: "The world has got a problem with Rupert. He wants world domination. I have met him — he is a very charming man, but then, so was Hitler."

But first off the starting blocks will be NBC, which has linked up with Microsoft to launch a 24-hour cable news channel, MSNBC, next month (Microsoft is investing $420 million over five years, NBC $200 million during the same period). It is a powerful combination, providing an interactive on-line news service on Microsoft's database, with background material to conventional television coverage — the ultimate synergy between TV and the computer screen.

MSNBC Interactive plans to become fully international with customised European and British versions over the next two years.

There is another global player, but it does not have the menace of a Murdoch and it has not yet penetrated the fearsomely competitive American market. Monitors showing BBC World, the corporation's under-funded commercial venture, flicker away in the offices of all the CNN bosses. Jordan says: "The BBC does a respectable job. We paid $80,000 for a satellite dish to pull it in. We like to be aware of the competition anywhere in the world."

CNN's other response to the incipient competition has been to go on the offensive: earlier this year it poached Chris Cramer, BBC News and Current Affairs' head of newsgathering, to be vice-president and managing director of CNN International. "Our goal is to hire the best journalists from all over the world, even if one or two of them work for the BBC," says Jordan. He jokingly refers to Cramer as a stodgy Brit, while the ex-BBC bruiser derides him as a buttoned-up Atlantan, but the new alliance appears to work well.

Cramer had a fearsome reputation at the BBC, even if it was punctured by a screening at his farewell party of a holiday video showing him cavorting naked by a holiday swimming pool to a soundtrack of I'm Too Sexy For My Shirt.

His game plan at the BBC was codenamed "FIFO" — fit in, or fuck off — and his favourite tactic when confronted by a querulous hack pleading for a pay increase was to wander over to the window, whistle through his teeth, and declare: "It's cold out there."

A month into his new job, he seems a transformed man; arriving at work at 5.50am each day appears to have mellowed the 48-year-old bruiser. It has, he admits, been a culture shock. "Coming from a publicly funded organisation, which rightly takes time over its decisions, I was stunned by the speed of decision-making, he says. "CNN made a statement in hiring me. They are not prepared to slip back from pole position. For the time being the competition is the BBC: it is healthy competition — they are not Johnny-come-latelies."

CNN is part of Turner Broadcasting System Inc (TBS), which employs 8,200 people worldwide, and runs TBS Superstation, a flagship cable entertainment network in the US, and services including the Cartoon Network and TNT which have expanded globally. Its headquarters, bought nine years ago in a rundown quarter of downtown Atlanta, is bursting at the seams with 3,500 employees and echoing to the din of urgent construction work struggling to keep pace with CNN's expansion.



Gearing up for war: CNN Centre in downtown Atlanta is at battle stations as rivals cast an envious eye over its achievements PHOTOGRAPH: CNN

And Turner's ambitions continue to grow; in the autumn the Federal Trade Commission will decide whether to give the green light to Time Warner's $7.5 billion purchase of Turner, creating the world's largest media company.

For potential rivals deflating the Turner balloon could be a tall order, but still the doubts persist: is CNN just mindlessly repetitive chewing gum news? Cramer leaps to its defence: "There is a perception, whether you like it or not, that we are a mile wide and an inch deep. If you have spent as much time watching CNNI as I have done over the last month, you would have quite a different perception. My view is you will see plenty of analysis."

But the priority will remain breaking news: the Gulf war, the siege at the White House, Waco, Oklahoma . . . these were the stories which won CNN its spurs. Cramer insists: "We will continue to do what we are best at — being there and being there first. If we lose that, we are dead. We have got to be everywhere where it matters and that is how the opposition will be judged."

CNN has links with 600 networks and local stations around the world. So when a bomb ripped through a government building in Oklahoma, CNN had access to pictures from three affiliate stations, while the New York-based networks had only one each. With 21 bureaux outside the US, CNN has more than its three rival networks combined.

ABC has pulled out before even reaching the starting line. CNN saw off a previous ABC venture with Westinghouse by launching Headline News as a spoiler. Last month ABC, now owned by Walt Disney, abandoned new plans for a news channel, blaming the rising cost of attracting subscribers. After six months of analysis it observed: "Cost projections to attain viable distribution levels have escalated far beyond reason."

CBS meanwhile is developing cable news plans, but talks about co-operation with Rupert Murdoch (committed to launching his 24-hour Fox news service this year) have stalled, with both sides seeking control.

Cramer says: "In a business planning sense one or two folks are going to take a pasting. CNN makes money out of broadcasting news. Other operators want a share because it is delivering substantial revenue: a few years ago it would have been regarded as incredible — now everyone wants a slice of it."

CNN was not always lucrative. When it launched internationally in October 1985 it was to lose money significantly for five years. Bob Ross, the president of Turner International, says it broke even in Europe in 1990 and worldwide a year later. "I find it hard to see how many news channels will survive domestically in the United States."

Ross says the impetus for rival news channels was driven by the fact many players had expensive news-gathering operations: it was a way to exploit costs. "It is also driven by ego, and the prospect of a substantial reduction of costs by digitisation of newsrooms."

There is no sign of battle fatigue in Atlanta. Jordan says: "Complacency is our death. It is not really in our vocabulary here. We have not had much competition in the US in 16 years, but it is a much bigger marketplace now and it will not be as easy to fight off this time."

How rival channels plan to take on CNN

NBC

CNN's most advanced rival: in conjunction with Microsoft, it plans to launch MSNBC on July 15, replacing its unsuccessful America's Talking chat show channel, which has about 21 million subscribers. Other deals with operators will mean the service is available in a total of 36 million homes, and the 215 stations in the NBC network will be encouraged to carry MSNBC.

Affiliate stations are expected to have opt-out slots to broadcast local news bulletins.

Over five years the partners, who are investing $620 million, are also planning an interactive on-line news service.

NEWS CORP

Rupert Murdoch's offer to US cable operators carrying his proposed 24-hour news service of a $10 signing fee for each subscriber has stunned rivals.

The service will start in Europe, Asia and Latin America and eventually be tailored to offer local bulletins. With a planned launch date before the end of the year, Murdoch's venture is headed by Roger Ailes, an ex-adviser to Presidents Reagan and Bush and ex-boss of NBC's business channel, CNBC.

It will draw on the Fox Television network, but its news-*gathering operation is skeletal* compared with its US rivals. There has been speculation it will also draw upon the resources of Murdoch's British-based Sky News, run in association with Reuters TV and losing more than £20 million a year, although its overseas operations have been cut as it concentrates on a domestic UK agenda.

CBS

Peter Lund, president and chief executive officer, has said CBS would be disadvantaged if its competitors had a news channel and it did not.

Three years ago its executives vetoed the idea of 24-hour news, but the climate may have changed since Westinghouse — previously involved in an abortive partnership with ABC to challenge CNN — acquired the company. Speculation in the industry has centred around two scenarios: CBS is said to have considered buying the country music cable network Gaylord Entertainment to turn it into a news channel. But rumours of a deal with Murdoch's News *Corporation appear to have* come to nothing.

BBC WORLD

Yet to break through into the American market, BBC World has concentrated its limited firepower in the European market. It celebrated its first birthday with availability in 15 million European homes and a forecast it could take five years to become profitable. Advertising funded, it claims 10 million viewers a week in Europe and can be seen in 111 countries and 43 million homes around the world. Bob Wheaton, commissioning editor of BBC Worldwide Television, contrasts its analytical approach with CNN's rolling news: "BBC World is not just newszak. It would be the death of the channel to have just snippets of news, with no meaning or interpretation."

Are cities doomed? Gloom predominates at the Habitat II conference in Istanbul, although one case gives cause for hope



Children scavenging the rubbish dumps of Manila in the Philippines PHOTOGRAPH: JONATHAN STEELE

Global warning: cities harm people

THEY call it the "brown agenda" — the search for ways through the murky soup of poverty, homelessness, pollution and deprivation afflicting the world's ever-expanding cities, *writes John Vidal.*

The scale and depth of the global urban crisis, says the official report of the United Nations Habitat II conference in Istanbul — which reached its half-way stage last Sunday — is far greater than previously thought. And it is steadily worsening as huge urbanisation takes place across Africa, Asia and Latin America.

"A low-grade civil war is being fought every day in the world's urban centres," said Wally N'Dow, Habitat II secretary-general. "Big numbers are risking their lives every day. Many cities are collapsing. We must wake up to the fact that it is no longer business as usual.

"Urbanisation is bringing about one of the most significant transformations in history. The problems are staggering," he added. There are now more than 600 million people officially homeless or living in life-threatening urban conditions. More than a billion lack sanitation and a further 250 million have no easy access to safe water.

Mr N'Dow said: "The overwhelming speed at which the world is urbanising leaves little time to adapt. We are witnessing daily urban catastrophes. Youth is going to seed. Drugs are rampant in cities, crime and terrorism are increasing. We risk a complete breakdown in cities. People feel alienated."

Governments, local authorities and citizen groups in Istanbul heard that declining resources, growing competition, food scarcity and environmental problems will set the agenda for cities in the next 50 years.

Most urban centres in the developing world will face extreme water shortages within 15 years, threatening life and health, Mr N'Dow warned. "More than 1 billion people cannot get clean drinking water. Dirty water causes 80 per cent of diseases in the developing world."

The United Nations report says one of the main reasons for the rapid deterioration in world cities in the past 10 years is economic structural adjustment programmes that have been imposed by the International Monetary Fund. These, it is said, have increased poverty, homelessness and unemployment in more than 50 countries, including some of the poorest in the world.

Structural adjustment programmes were devised in the 1980s after the international debt crisis. They have demanded that developing countries privatise and deregulate industries, cut public spending and reduce or eliminate health and education subsidies.

"In most countries undergoing structural adjustment, large numbers of people have lost what had been relatively stable jobs. One of the effects in the south has been to cut public spending and to reduce budgetary deficits. The cuts are usually in sectors that are not considered as priority or core productive sectors, which in many cases included human settlements," says the report.

But the blame is put on the rich for much of what Mr N'Dow calls "the emerging anarchy" in the world's cities. He criticised the United States and other leading industrialised countries for not accepting that people have a right to adequate housing, and blamed liberalisation of trade and the activities of multinational corporations for accelerating urbanisation.

"The world's aid agencies and development banks mostly give low priority to what is being called the brown agenda of sanitation, housing, air pollution and waste, which adversely affect the poor most."

The report paints an alarming picture of growing crime accompanying urbanisation. "The process of urbanisation goes hand in hand with a rise in urban violence that outstrips the growth of cities," said Franz Vanderschuren, a UN adviser on urban poverty in a parallel report presented to the conference.

"Violence is the product of a society characterised by inequality and social exclusion. The offender has often been stimulated by a social environment dominated by consumerism, competition and by the mass media which propagate and legitimise violence," Mr Vanderschuren added.

According to studies in the US, watching violence encourages aggressive behaviour, increases violence and desensitises viewers. The annual cost of urban decay as result of violence in the US is estimated at $50 billion.

Highlighting the fact that urban decay has been accelerating while the numbers of young people in cities have grown rapidly, the report says that about two-thirds of the rapidly growing urban population in Africa is now made up of the 0-25 age group.

It warns of the social and political risks in having very large numbers of "unoccupied and very frustrated" young people. One of the contributors to the report says that cities are increasingly prone to politicised urban violence, fundamentalist or mafia-like activities.

The conference heard that at least once every five years 60 per cent of people living in cities with more than 100,000 people are crime victims. Most is committed by the young against property.

The report says that between 30 and 60 per cent of housing in most developing-country cities is illegal, with more than 75 per cent of homes in cities such as Kenya's capital, Nairobi, and its Bangladeshi counterpart, Dhaka, built without permission.

The conference is not expected to recommend more power to governments or new money to alleviate the problems of urbanisation. Instead, it is likely to seek a shift in decision-making to citizen groups and local authorities. "It's a call for partnerships," said Mr N'Dow.

"If cities don't work, you can't walk the streets, make telephone calls, get a bus," he added. "Where the airline does not work, you cannot get investment. If this conference does nothing but convey this message . . . it will have done a very good service."

Let them eat cake

Jan Rocha visits Curitiba, Brazil, one of the world's most advanced cities

JAIME LERNER, the architect who has transformed Curitiba, in southern Brazil, into one of the world's greenest cities, says the secret is simplicity. "People try to sell you complexity, they see the destiny of the city as tragedy, but if you're pessimistic about cities, then you are pessimistic about human beings."

Lerner has been twice re-elected to run the city and is now state governor (his environmentally correct office is built of recycled telegraph poles, surrounded by trees). He admits, however, that Curitiba, population 1.5 million, is no paradise. "We have the same problems as any other Brazilian city, as any Third World city, we have shanty towns, crime and poverty." (Thirty-two per cent of the inhabitants earn less than $200 a month; the population has grown 200 per cent in 20 years.) "The difference is in the respect for people, the quality of service provided. People feel part of the city, they belong to the city, they are proud of it and responsible for what happens."

Lerner's creed is revolutionary: "The poorer you are, the better the services you should have."

When he first became mayor, Curitiba was mushrooming as the rural exodus of the 1970s sent people into the cities and the transport system was heading for chaos: 50 bus companies competed in the city centre, the jams worsening every day.

Something drastic had to be done. A subway system cost too much, and would have taken too long to build. So Lerner's planner identified what made an underground system fast and applied it to the bus service. Huge red articulated buses purr speedily up special lanes, stopping at tubular steel and glass stations where passengers buy tickets before boarding. As they stop, ramps descend from their doors and boarding time is minimal. Neat little lifts in the pavement raise handicapped passengers to the platform. Lerner has produced an efficient, passenger-friendly service that makes London seem antediluvian. Bus jams never happen, vandalism is unknown.

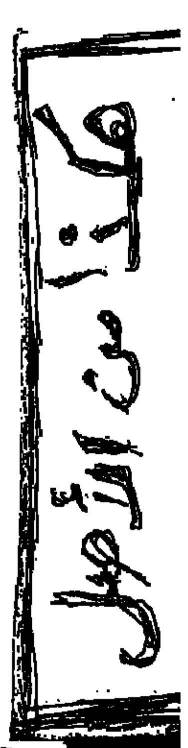
"People don't vandalise it because they like it. They feel respected, they show respect," says Carlos Ceneviva, president of the municipal company Urbs, which collects fares and regulates 10 private companies. No subsidies are paid: 80 per cent of people go to work by bus; 28 per cent of car owners take the bus instead, which has led to a 20 per cent drop in fuel consumption. Lerner says: "The less importance you give to cars, the better it is for people. When you widen streets for cars you throw away identity and memory."

Curitiba has also revolutionised the concept of waste: it can mean food, books or even Shakespeare. Last month 700 schoolchildren each paid 4kg of recyclable rubbish to watch King Lear, performed by one of Brazil's best theatre companies. They came from the city's poorest areas and it was the first time they had been to the theatre.

And 35,000 low-income families exchange recyclable waste for food once a fortnight. At the Parque Mane Garrincha, a township named after a footballer, I saw people trundling wheelbarrows and carrying bags with tins, old toys, paper, plastic and bottles. One woman brought a broken window, another an old gas cooker. Council workers weighed the waste and loaded it in a lorry. Each 4kg meant 1kg of fruit and vegetables from another lorry. That day it was potatoes, bananas — and cake. In one month, the 54 exchange points collected 282 tonnes of waste at a cost of $110,000 — lower than before; the fruit and vegetables are bought at market prices from small farmers. Benefits include a better diet for citizens and less risk of flooding from rubbish in streams and canals. Nearly 70 per cent of waste is now recycled and sold.

Lerner dismisses the critics who say that these schemes will not work in bigger cities: "It's nothing to do with scale or money. Every city could do the same. Curitiba is different only because it has made itself different, it has gone against the flow and made itself a human city."





Symbols of the modern age take their place in history

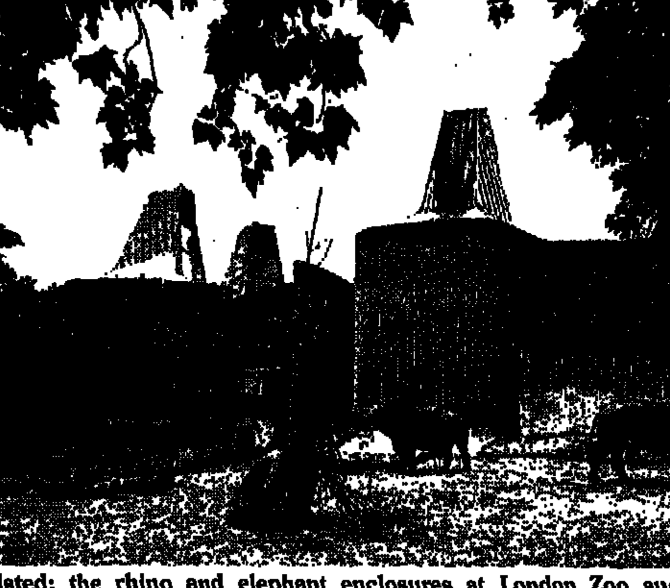
Dan Glaister on a strong showing in the latest list of the best post-war architecture

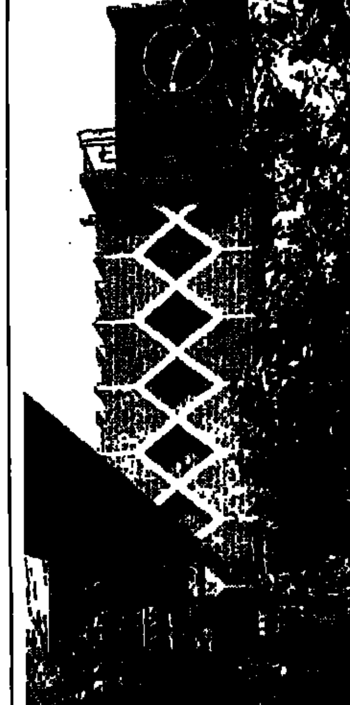
THE Lawn is not what its name suggests. Built from 1950 to 1952, it has the dubious honour of being England's first domestic tower block, conceived by its architect to preserve some oak trees. But this symbol of the modern age in Harlow, Essex, became a part of the nation's heritage when it was included last week on a list of recommendations for listing from English Heritage. It was joined on the list by some of the nation's best-known sculptors, including Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Elisabeth Frink.

The latest attempt to bring heritage a little more up to date came with the release of the recommendations and the accompanying Royal Institute of British Architects exhibition, Something Worth Keeping?, in central London. Both focus on post-war architecture in England, featuring five areas: town centres, New Town housing, entertainment buildings, rural housing, and sculpture. It is the second such English Heritage list this year. A third is due in September.

Martin Cherry, head of listing for English Heritage, said: "We tried to get the full range of English architecture since the war. We tend to forget how amazingly innovative British art and architecture were in the post-war years."

Innovative designs on show included well-known structures such as the Elephant House at London Zoo and the Chichester Festival Theatre, as well as more ordinary buildings including rural housing designed by the architects Taylor and Green in the mid-1950s.





Listed: the rhino and elephant enclosures at London Zoo and (right) the Landsbury Estate in Tower Hamlets, east London

Taylor and Green's buildings were innovative for their time. "It was a fusion of the vernacular and a more modern style," said Karen Kelly, director of a BBC documentary on the architects. "They were thrilled at the idea that their houses could have more impact on the way people lived than cathedrals could."

Dr Cherry said it was difficult to know what age limit to set in drawing up the recommendations. "Many of these buildings were well-known at the time but have since been forgotten. The criteria are that it has to be of special interest and it has to be of high quality."

Although none of the recommendations are likely to excite the response aroused by the inclusion of London's Centrepoint last year, several of the buildings on the list have not always been recognised for their beauty. The Belgrade Theatre in Coventry and the Eastbourne Convention Centre would not typically be associated with the finer parts of the nation's heritage.

"I don't think the centre's ugly," said Dr Cherry. "Actually it's quite popular in Eastbourne. You could say that much of Eastbourne's prosperity is dependent on its versatility."

Many of the sculptures in the list had originally been commissioned by the London County Council, which had a commitment to placing contemporary art in public places. London schools feature heavily in the list of 57 sculptures, as do shopping centres and New Town squares.

"It's fantastic to come across classical, Greek-inspired objects in such a setting," said Suzanne Marstan, a sculpture consultant for English Heritage, of Henry Moore's Deep Seated Woman, installed in Jamaica Street in east London. "In a sense the incongruity makes it fantastic."

The listing will protect the sculptures by making it difficult for any of them to be moved from the position for which they were commissioned.

A Country Diary

Ray Collier

HIGHLANDS: Not a week goes by without me hearing of predators attacking poultry. The latest incident happened to my nearest neighbour half a mile away. Sometime between 5.30 and seven in the evening, a predator killed two small hens, leaving one headless corpse in the garden and taking the other away. The blame was laid squarely at the door of a pine marten although the animal was not seen. Other birds have been taken in the past and on at least one occasion a pine marten was caught in a hutch for cockerels, most of which were dead or dying. In the Highlands such a situation is normal these days and many people have stopped keeping poultry because of such predation. So the pine marten is getting a bad press. But there are plenty of other predators. Mink, for example, are now scattered throughout the Highlands and they are a serious problem on some of the outer isles — not only to poultry but also to wild birds such as ground nesting waders and terns. Polecat ferrets seem to be on the increase along with stoats. Despite persecution, fox numbers are thriving. Feral cats and wildcats can also be a problem. Meanwhile pine martens continue their spread south and east.

Letter from Afghanistan Mary Dunlop

The sound and the fury

I AM watching an equestrian rugby scrum. Dozens of horses are urged, kicked and whipped into a position from which their riders, by leaning at gravity-defying angles from their saddles, can grab possession of the *ghuzala* or "ball" — in this case a headless calf. Although the name of the game — buzkashi — is literally translated as goat grabbing, nowadays in northern Afghanistan a calf carcass is usually used.

In less civilised times when the plains of Mongolia and Central Asia were perpetually awash with blood, it was customary to play with prisoners of war. Rumour likes to have it that during the Soviet invasion the Russian prisoners of war proved a fitting substitute for goat or calf.

The battle for possession is fierce as horses, snorting and baring their teeth, rear up, hooves lashing out in all directions as they are forced into the centre of the fray. When finally a *chapandaz* (an experienced buzkashi rider who, as with western jockeys, usually rides for an owner) manages to haul the carcass on to his saddle and break free of the mêlée he is hotly pursued by a hundred horses.

Either the 40kg carcass was wrested from his grasp by one of the other riders or he dropped it in sheer terror as the pack closed in on him, but now another scrum is taking place. I hear my companions murmur appreciatively to each other that today they are playing properly, and ask for an explanation.

"Well", says Sultan, "today there are not so many horses belonging to big commanders, or *pahlwan*, so no one is afraid to try and get the *ghuzala*."

Before I can ask more questions, the thunder of hooves pulls my attention back to the game as the two lead riders seem to be trying to split the calf down the middle.

Now two separate scrums take place — one around the calf, the other under my nose, directly in front of the sponsor of this week's game, who is clutching a wad of money. He is surrounded by armed body guards, who even carry rockets on their backs as well as the inevitable AK-47 rifle. I feel the hot steaming breath of the horses as they threaten to bite each other. My companion tells me: "The riders have come to collect their winnings but they do not agree with the referee's decision."

SOMEONE actually referees? There are rules? I am astounded. "Oh, yes, they have to go round the outside of the green flag on the other side of the field and at this end the calf has to be dropped right in the circle."

As the calf nears total disintegration the sponsor is urged by a man who gallops up and down the field yelling out the names of the riders and their horse owners and the stated prize money, to raise the ante for the final game. As the cash is handed over, the rider is besieged by demands for baksheesh, or a tip, by itinerant beggars, by the town crier and by the man in a tattered overcoat carrying a shovel with which to scoop up deposits left by over-excited horses.

Now a madman sits himself down in the middle of the field allowing the horses to thunder past without a hoof touching him, to the vocal delight of the crowd. Accidents are relatively few, thanks to the superb horsemanship of the *chapandazan* and intelligence of the horses. Still, it is not quite polo.

Buzkashi is not always all that it seems. In that crowded stadium thousands of Mazar-i-Sharif's citizens — all male — witness overt political gamesmanship. The kalashnikov culture has invaded even sports in Afghanistan. If the *chapandaz* who emerges from the swirling mass of horses is riding for a powerful *pahlwan* he can be sure of having a clear field — no one will attempt to stop his headlong gallop to victory. It also shows who is currently wielding the most power in the local political arena.

When the big boys are playing away, the Mazar spectators can enjoy real buzkashi, their cheers and spontaneous applause for a spectacular goal in marked contrast to the silence that meets a solitary ride to victory. Buzkashi used to be a team event but now a hundred individuals look out for themselves — what could be a better indication of today's political situation in this desperately divided country?

Notes & Queries

Joseph Harker

HOW should we define working class, middle class and upper class?

WHEN you go to work in the morning, if your name is on the front of the building, you're upper class; if your name is on your desk, you're middle class; and if your name is on your shirt, you're working class. — *Rachel Goldeen, Palo Alto, California, USA*

IS IT better to live in an ugly house opposite a beautiful one or in a beautiful house opposite an ugly one?

IF THE ugly house can be made into one's dream house inside, give me the ugly house any time. But if the inside is as offensive as the outside, and is not amenable to transformations, I would plump for the beautiful house and put up thick net curtains. — *Nicole Jetter, London*

IF YOU have an altruistic nature, it is better to live in an ugly house opposite a beautiful one. You can then make the exterior of your "ugly" house more beautiful by growing climbing plants up the facade, and cultivating an attractive front garden. If you live opposite an ugly house, there is little you can do to increase the beauty in the street, beyond offering your neighbour some advice. — *Simon Green, Hull*

DOES the European flag have a nickname?

THE Euroflap — *Ben Lovell, Wilmington, Delaware, USA*

THE star-spangled banner. — *E Slack, Castanet, France*

THE Irish *Gormtoirt réaltaciorcal* can be roughly translated as the blue mass of starry roundness. — *Conor Donnsrón-McKeown, Donaghmore, Co Tyrone, Ireland*

SUPERMARKETS sell own-brand products which are manufactured by well-known companies. How can I find out their identities?

COMPARE sell-by dates. If they have been inkjet-coded on the package you can often tell by looking for similar colours or typefaces. Sometimes however, they remove all doubt by incorporating the same batch codes/product numbers in the sell-by information. — *Ronan Geary, London*

Any answers?

IS THERE any currency which has a higher unit value than sterling? Which currency has the lowest unit value, and how many of them are there to the pound? — *Neil Maynard, Lantau Island, Hong Kong*

WHICH way does water go down the plug-hole in space? — *William Barrett, London*

Answers should be e-mailed to Weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ

Spit and polish

MUSIC
Robert Yates

YOU can tell Patti Smith is an outlaw, the way she spits on stage. "She's not very ladylike, is she," says somebody behind me which, as insights go, is akin to noting that Vlad the Impaler was not very nice. Patti Smith may be many things — equal parts Egyptian goddess, celibate Shaker and Jerry Lee Lewis is her own preferred analysis — but a lady is not one of them. At least she did not direct her phlegm at the audience, punk style, which would have been doubly cruel since the audience had come in reverence.

The New York singer who made her name in the mid-1970s had not played in Britain in more than 10 years, and just before she arrived on stage, the London ICA's theatre had the hush of a church about it. You half expected a prefab altar to be whisked on, and the venerated Patti to arrive with a pile of hosts and communion wine.

Instead, she appears with a couple of likely-lad musicians. One is long-term colleague Lenny Kaye, part of Smith's band when she recorded Horses, her 1975 debut album, a kind of punk rock with A levels, and still the record most cited by women in pop who never much fancied Doris Day as a role model. Patti Smith deserves a prize for suggesting that women performers did not have to wear paisley leggings and commune with an acoustic guitar. The second musician is Oliver Ray who, along with Kaye, has collaborated with Smith on her forthcoming album, Gone Again, her first in eight years, and whose songs provide the bulk of the set's material.

The songs are largely contemplative, but from the opening beat, Smith is in exuberant form. Her clothes are, as ever, distressed — she must buy jackets with the elbows already worn through — though she is anything but and, as the acoustic show progresses, she becomes so animated that Kaye and Ray have to duck from her swirling arms. Death suffuses the new material — the album was recorded less than a year after the death of her husband, musician Fred "Sonic" Smith, while About A Boy is apparently a tribute to the late Kurt Cobain.

It is not Smith's way to play the helpless widow, and it's to her credit that she resists sentimentality. She has a useful deflationary trick — the more charged the material, the more aggressive her between-song patter. Although she has spent the best part of the past 15 years retired in the Detroit suburbs, taking care of her kids, she retains the manner of a bar-room fighter."

Despite plenty of evidence to the contrary, Smith has gained a reputation as a fine wordsmith who happens to work in rock. The truth, however, is that although a great songwriter and performer, many of her words, naked on the page, have the gauche insistence of a fourth-former discovering self-expression. Which is fine, because they sound just right when her one-off voice — part Bob Dylan with a decent range, part keening banshee — gets to work on them. She could sing the telephone directory and transform it into a grand drama.

Action men's lore of the jungle

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks Smith

UNLESS it was a subtle satire on the military mind — and that I doubt — SAS: The Soldiers' Story (Carlton) was brutal viewing and damn near unforgivable during the Dunblane inquiry.

It was the story of the storming of the Iranian embassy in London in 1980, told by some of the soldiers. Newsreel and reconstruction were so seamlessly interwoven that you could not even see a change in the light.

This is the thing itself. This is how it feels to go through a house like shit through a goose, taking no prisoners. It feels good. "It's the ultimate high. I can strongly recommend it." You would be looking at the SAS for some time before you were reminded of a violet by a mossy stone ("We went in to do the impossible because we knew we could") but they hid their faces and their names.

The SAS were training in what they call — well, they would — The Killing House when the news of the siege reached them in Hereford. Everyone went "Bollocks!" Then everyone went "Whoopee!" Language is not one of their weapons. They have others.

After the bollocks of negotiation, the whoopee of action. "We were not part of society at that moment in time. We had created our own society. The law of the jungle. Kill or be killed. And for that moment in time we could have been on a different planet. It wouldn't matter who was in there, what weapons they had. They couldn't stop us." People who make TV watch it in viewing theatres. They forget that everything is more intense in your own home.

Mack said: "This bloke, he's lying on a chaise longue as such. Yeah? And he's sort of sprawled there like you've seen old-fashioned films and brmmmm! I don't know how many rounds each person fired but it put him on his arse and that was the name of the game."

The body jerked as if electrocuted. The room was on fire. "He actually got roasted. You could smell it. You could smell the flesh burning."

As hostages were manhandled down the stairs, Snapper saw one was carrying a grenade. "He was coming down in a crouched position. He knew he didn't have long to live. I thought 'Gotta do something! Gotta neutralise the threat.' I brought the MP5 up and I blatted the guy on the back of the neck. Two or three magazines were then emptied into him and he twitched and vomited his life away on the carpet." The grenade rolled out of his hand like an apple in Eden.

The Government was grateful. "Old Whitelaw turned up to say thank you to the blokes. He was actually crying. But, then again, if your job was on the line . . . if we hadn't done ours, he would have been sacked. No great loss."

The terrorists' leader lay with his eyes half closed as if drowsing in the sun. He was 26.

The embassy was gutted but, as their cover ran out on the first day of the siege, the insurance company refused to pay up. Now they're really tough.

Forms of terror

ART
Adrian Searle

THE stereotypical image of Alberto Giacometti is that of the troubled artist toiling all night in his tiny, filthy studio at his heavy-footed figures, with their shrunken heads and attenuated limbs. The artist at work through the small hours, fashioning an army of anorexic solitaries, coagulated from little lumps of plaster or clay, pressed on to their barely-hidden armatures, in an atmosphere clouded by plaster dust, fag ash and pervasive, Existentialist gloom.

Or Giacometti painting and at the drawing board, dealing with the impossibility of describing the reality of a tablecloth on a table, a glass, a moment, the world collapsed down to the smallest thing, the near at hand. Giacometti painting Jean Genet or Sartre, or his wife, his lover, his wife's lover — and recording his necessarily failed attempt in the grim washes, rubbed-out contours and wristy, hysterical stabs of black through which a face finally, fitfully emerges. Faces which gaze back at us, as knotted, juddering, over-drawn spiders' webs on the soiled canvas: faces which have the look of having been abandoned, after many sittings, in a state of near annihilation.

Two further images: first, a self-portrait of the artist, aged 16. A wide, toothy, mocking grin, a cloud of thick brown hair, a quizzical expression, eyes like black coins. A second portrait, this time by Cartier-Bresson, capturing the artist at 60, crossing a Paris street in the rain; Giacometti with his raincoat hunched up over his head (the way kids do, when they're playing at being monsters) as he walks towards us, his baggy-eyed ruin of a face peering out from beneath the coat.

Between the image of the artist in his youth and the man in the wet Paris street lies a complicated life, and the complexity of a lifetime's work. The Giacometti retrospective at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art (until September 22) gives us the Giacometti we know, and glimpses of a Giacometti we don't — and perhaps never can — entirely understand.

Giacometti was a complicated, dangerous artist, who began as a dutiful son, aping his father's lurid pointillist painting style. He sculpted and drew his parents, siblings and schoolfriends; he went to Paris and, from making cubist-like sculptures of heads, went on to create a number of anxious, sexually provocative and implicitly violent object-sculptures, odd plaque-like heads and flattened torsos.

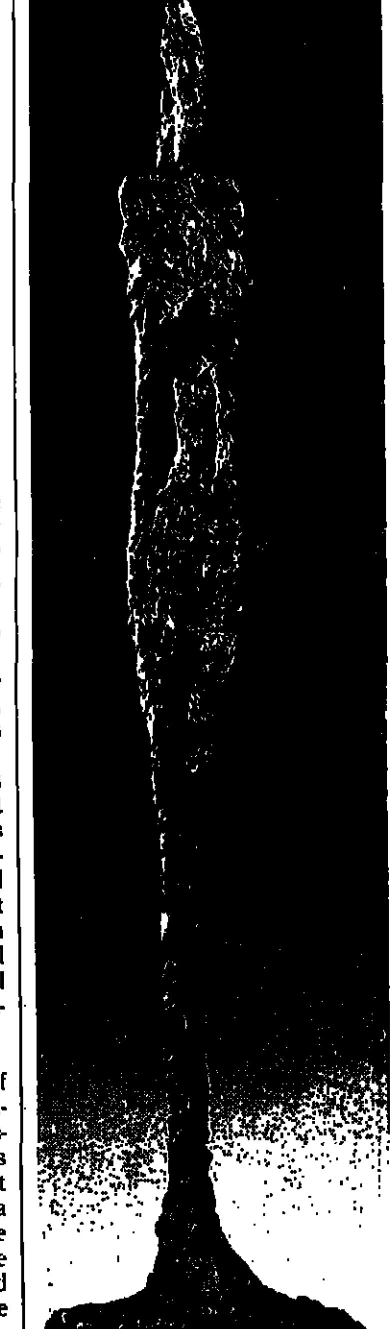
He later turned his back on his work of the 1920s and '30s, when he was affiliated first with André Breton's Surrealist pack, then with the group around George Bataille and his short-lived journal Documents. He claimed to have dismissed the work of this period as masturbatory shit, even though he frequently showed it alongside his later work, which focused almost entirely on the rendition of the figure, modelled and painted from life.

Thirty years after his death, Giacometti is still a compelling artist, and his work continues to exert its presence on figurative sculptors.

Although it contains more than 200 works, including one of the most substantial groupings of the artist's drawings ever assembled, the Edinburgh show (which has travelled from Vienna, and may or may not come to London) has too much missing — firstly from his so-called "Surrealist" period in the 1930s, and from the late 1940s — to be commended as a definitive exhibition.

BUT IT is the arrangement of much of the sculpture in Edinburgh that finally frustrates. The heads of Giacometti's father, from 1927, lined up against the wall as though they were in a shooting gallery, the plaque-like heads and torsos, again from the late 1920s, similarly flattened against the wall, as if they were merely examples of sculpture.

Worse still, the tiny figures and heads Giacometti made during the second world war, holed up in a room in Zurich, have been placed on the shelves of a little glass-fronted cabinet set into the wall on a landing. Even though just one of these works — small enough to fit in a pocket or the palm of the hand — could fill a room with its presence, here they are reduced to artifacts, or mantelpiece gewgaws. These mesmerising, strange pieces almost have the appearance of snot, or little gobbets of shit, or burnt-out matches, dwarfed by the rough cubes and slabs from which they emerge. These abject dramas of concentration and reduction depend, as do all Giacometti's sculptures, on their ability to command the space around them, and to focus our attention. Giacometti's sculpture, even reduced to a kind of residue, still maintains some trace of the human presence and its enigma. His object-sculptures and little *mises-en-scenes* — the odd three-dimensional board games, the fearsome and fetishistic spiked dildo titled Disagreeable Object, the body, cracked open like a crab, with its dismembered limbs and broken rib cage, of Woman With Her Throat Cut, similarly but in a very different way, are a confrontation between the mind and its objects, the unconscious and the world.



Standing Woman, 1948

An enormous disembodied leg which seems to stand (in every sense) for an entire, gigantic figure; minute figures crossing a square; a man walking in the rain; figures standing forever immobilised in the changing light and a forest of female figures watched by a man buried up to his chest in the ground; these, as much as they deal with the self and the world in a purely sculptural sense, are intensely poetic as images.

What claims does Alberto Giacometti have on our attention now; why is he still so compelling? It is not because of a fashionable nostalgia for mid-century Bohemian Paris, but more because of his preoccupation with the terror of forms and of formlessness, the space between ourselves and the things around us.

In the exhibition catalogue, Reinhold Hohl makes the claim that Giacometti was a truly great draughtsman, better even than Picasso. To my mind this is a preposterous claim, and claims in general for the artist's draughtsmanship are frequently overstated. His drawings, with all their rubbings out, their transitional strokes, their drawn and redrawn contours, their endless equivocations — as though he couldn't acually find the figure in front of him, or where the figure ended and the space around it began — strike me as entirely secondary, however much they are a record of the fleetingness of perception. Worse, they seem terribly stylised and theatrical. The essence of Giacometti's drawing is in the profiles and contours of the sculptures themselves.

His paintings, while dramatising the impossibility of capturing the living presence of another human being, are often horribly formulaic and a bit mad. By and large, they are just muckily coloured drawings.

It is as a sculptor that Giacometti should be remembered. And a sculpture is not a person, but a memorial to the figure's absence, and the enduring presence of the one who made it.

Talk on the wild side

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

SPIKE LEE'S Girl 6 looks terrific. This has something to do with Theresa Randle, its star, but rather more to do with a style that manages to suggest both an increasing maturity and the adventurousness of his first film, She's Gotta Have It.

But looks aren't everything, and however much accomplishment, there seems to be a hole in the middle of Girl 6 where the content ought to have been. Lee's aspiring actress, a virtuoso at phone sex, refuses to bare herself for a predatory film-maker (a well-cast Quentin Tarantino) at the beginning of the film, but in the end finds that she is getting too close to the clients she so excites in the phone-sex business. It may be a way of dominating men, but there are too many psychopaths around to maintain her small triumph for long. The film allows us to wallow in the spurious thrills of the business while trying to persuade us that it has a serious point to make.

That point, at least in part, seems to be that Girl 6 is not a victim, even while allowing (mostly white) men to act out their fantasies down the line. She is powerfully in command of both herself and them. Unlike her colleagues in the "office", she's doing it for more than money but is detached enough to know that she's better than anyone else at the job. Perhaps. But the film protests too much at times and in the end doubles back on itself.

What is evident is the excellence of Randle's performance and the skill with which Lee disguises what looks like a lack of conviction. His point seems to be that she thinks she is in control, looks as if she is, but the job is actually destroying her.

The film certainly has a saving sense of humour, often expressed with cinematic references. But it still doesn't truly convince. In She's Gotta Have It, the protagonist refuses to knuckle under to the usual demands of black men. In Girl 6, the central character seems, even in her hours of delirium as the most desired operator, to have been defeated by the white callers who crave for her. It's a peculiar treatise, often brilliantly engineered. But there's surely a crossed line somewhere along the way.



Smooth operator . . . Theresa Randle in Spike Lee's Girl 6

No cleverer film than **The Confessional** has come London's way for some time, with the possible exception of Bryan Singer's intricately plotted The Usual Suspects. However, the former isn't so much of a complicated thriller as an authentically Hitchcockian mystery which uses the Master himself as a contributory character.

Robert Lepage, the writer/director from Quebec, makes the preparations for the shooting of Hitchcock's I Confess in Quebec in 1952 an integral part of his story but starts it in 1989 when a painter (Lothaire Bluteau) arrives home in the city to bury his father. He searches for his half-brother who seems to have disappeared. Eventually finding him in a gay cruising haunt, he discovers a few guilty secrets, including the fact that the half-brother was possibly the illegitimate son of a priest. The mystery deepens when a family tragedy is uncovered.

Lepage orchestrates this with formidable skill, moving from one period to the other, often by switching time frames within the same sequence and using every cinematic device he can, including tributes to other Hitchcock films, to sustain its interest. Sometimes he goes too far, creating more atmosphere than emotion, and the film's slightly chilly brilliance does work against as well as for it. But its general idea — that from one fatal transgression a whole history of despair has erupted — is formidably laid out before us.

Jon Avnet's **Up Close and Personal** has two of the most potent Hollywood stars as leads, but can't find the chemistry to profit by it. Michelle Pfeiffer appears as a famous anchorperson recalling her career, which begins when she persuades Robert Redford's veteran newsman to give her a job. From a menial office worker, she becomes a weather girl and then, thanks both to her all-consuming ambition and the newsman's gradual attraction to her, a reporter. She marries him, but as her star ascends, his wanes. And she can't help him as he helped her. This is the stuff of true romance and, as such, just about passes muster. But it also purports to be an inside story about the American media, complete with naked ambition, jealousies and proprietorial perfidies.

This is where the film falls down, though any melodramatic fiction Hollywood cares to produce about American television is more than balanced by actual fact. Even so, the film hasn't the conviction of The China Syndrome or Network, nor the entertainment value of Broadcast News and To Die For. It lacks both substance and wit.

Pleasures of the flesh

THEATRE
Michael Billington

SEX and death are the themes that reverberate through Alan Bennett's joyous farce, **Habeas Corpus**. Unseen in London since 1973, it gets a magnificent revival by Sam Mendes at the Donmar Warehouse and does a lot to light up the increasingly dingy West End theatre.

As in all the best farces, the characters are in the grip of some overwhelming obsession. Arthur Wicksteed, a Hove GP, pursues all the sex he can get. His neglected wife craves the sensual fun that life has denied her, his flat-chested sister yearns for mountainous breasts, a celibate canon aches to lose his virginity, a falsie-merchant from Leatherhead longs to see the perfect fit. Identities are mistaken and wires crossed as these characters seek in various ways to indulge their long-felt wants.

The play has a Latin title. It could equally well have another: *carpe diem* or seize the day. For Bennett's point is that we suspend our fear of death, of the body's decay, of our knowledge that all flesh is as grass by our constant urge for sex.

To the randy GP, the human body is both a cesspit and a source of endless pleasure, and it is he who finally states the play's governing theme: "He whose lust lasts, lasts longest."

What makes the play so beguiling, however, is its mixture of the sensual and the stylish: it is like a Magill postcard crossed with Magritte, a Cooney and Chapman farce rewritten in the manner of Orton or Wilde.

The mechanism is deft and ingenious. But when Wicksteed's neglected wife talks of "my body lying there night after night in the wasted moonlight: I know now how the Taj Mahal must feel," the writing skilfully mixes the poignant with a comic pay-off.

Mendes's production may not be quite as cartoonish as Ronald Eyre's original but it gets even closer to the play's mix of tumescence and mortality. Rob Howell's spartan set comprises a painted background of fleecy clouds. And the performances combine humanity with a hard-driving farcical style.

Jim Broadbent's Wicksteed moves marvellously from sly perkiness to hang-dog sadness as he prowls the West Pier waiting for a non-arriving date. Brenda Blethyn as his wife makes something touching as well as funny out of the scene where the falsie-fitter probes her unclaimed breasts. Nicholas Woodeson hints at the Arturo Ui-like mania lurking within the formal breast of a BMA bigshot. And there is firm support, in every sense, from Sarah Woodward as the would-be pneumatic sister and Natalie Walter as a cantilevered sexpot much possessed by death.

A dirty mind, someone said, is a joy for ever. But the great thing about Bennett is that he combines a juvenile delight in sex with a middle-aged man's awareness of mortality. And what makes his play so appealing is its sense that, even if death claims us all, we might as well make the most of our slowly decaying bodies.

Most great theatre has stemmed from a collaborative interpretation of a written text. The Maly Theatre of St Peterburg's Claustrophobia, getting its British première at the cosmopolitan Nottingham Playhouse before moving on to Glasgow and London, derives, however, from actors' improvisations. Which may explain why it combines stunning ensemble vivacity with structural amorphousness.

The Maly, under Lev Dodin's direction, are an amazing troupe. And, over the last decade, they have built up a loyal following in Britain through such productions as Stars In The Morning Sky, Brothers And Sisters, and Gaudeamus. But in the past their physical inventiveness has been anchored in the work of existing texts or adapted novels. Here they have no such safety-net, and it shows.

CLAUSTROPHOBIA started from the actors' responses to their native Russia on returning from foreign travels: what it records is the confusion of a young generation caught between the collapse of the Soviet system and the uncertainties of freedom. They seem to be searching for an identity in an ideological vacuum. But while the broad thrust is clear, the details are often puzzling.

Physically, the show is an astonishing Meyerholdian display: the actors kick and high-step to bursts of Rossini, Mozart, Piaf. But what I miss is the kind of narrative framework that in Gaudeamus gave a structure to the ensemble virtuosity. Even judged as a spectacle, this two-year-old show has been overtaken by recent events, with the Communists edging closer towards the middle-ground. As a showcase for Dodin's multi-talented company, Claustrophobia is eminently worth seeing. As a guide to the new Russia, it is a sketchily impressionistic piece crying out for an authorial vision.

Accompanist to the stars

OBITUARY
Jimmy Rowles

JIMMY ROWLES, who has died aged 77, was a subtle, laconic and all-but-psychic pianist who elevated the art of creative jazz accompaniment to the status of a miniaturist wonder of the world.

His reputation spread beyond the cognoscenti late in his long playing life. Supporting musicians in the shadows behind the soloist don't usually inspire much more than shop-talk among knowledgeable fans. But Rowles was different. The city of Los Angeles even declared September 14 Jimmy Rowles Day. He was the kind of accompanist who made every kind of soloist — usually singers, in his case — sound better, even the great ones.

This conclusion was easy to establish in Rowles's case, as he worked with almost all the great ones. Billie Holiday, Peggy Lee, Sarah Vaughan and Ella Fitzgerald were devoted to his playing and sought him out.

Rowles's magic surfaced, obliquely, on the British jazz scene last year. London singer Norma Winstone had written her own lyrics to Rowles's composition The Peacocks and sent them on spec to the veteran pianist. Rowles liked her version but negotiating a recording date wasn't easy. Rowles's emphysema prohibited him leaving the California sun but the singer responded, "All right, I'll come to you" and covered the costs herself.

Rowles's inspirations were the playing of the great swing pianist Teddy Wilson and the writing of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn.

He began playing as a college freshman and in 1940 joined vaudevillian jazzman Slim Gaillard's group and later became part of a group led by Lester Young and his brother Lee. In 1941 he worked with Billie Holiday and Ben Webster, and over the next two years with the orchestras of Benny Goodman and Woody Herman, joining Tommy Dorsey and eventually Bob Crosby after military service.

In the 1950s, Rowles's increasingly encyclopaedic knowledge and apparently infallible memory for the harmonies of songs led him to more lucrative studio work for film and TV, and he joined Henry Mancini's successful jazz-tinged orchestra, which he stayed with for 20 years.

He moved to New York in 1973 and performed regularly with saxophonists Al Cohn and Zoot Sims, becoming a regular on the New York jazz scene and recording occasionally, making a highly regarded album with Stan Getz featuring his classic The Peacocks in 1977. Further albums in the 1980s showed that his powers weren't waning. They also introduced the excellent boppish trumpet playing of his daughter Stacy.

Rowles's art isn't one that many jazz pianists today would find the need to learn with the same relish for understatement and self-effacement that he did, but he exuded musicianship with every barely-struck note.

John Fordham

Jimmy Rowles, musician, born August 19, 1918; died May 28, 1996

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

Gagarin and I, by Stephen Blanchard (Vintage, £8.99)

A *DEBUT* novel, but one written with such expert control that you can hardly believe it. Narrated from the point of view of Leonard, a 14-year-old boy growing up in his mother's boarding house in 1960s Hull (I assume; the town is unnamed), it is a masterpiece of evasion, reticence, and recording. The dialogue, especially that between his mother and aunt, is perfectly poised between fatuity and insight ("'Tea won't bring him back,' my mother said. 'He's too far gone for that!'"), and the story progresses as much through what is left out as what is put in. The vocabulary is fittingly simple, but the descriptive gift is awesome, subtle and penetrating. It's a novel of immense intelligence and deft moral legerdemain.

The Trouble with Science, by Robin Dunbar (Faber, £7.99)

HOW dare anti-brains like Brian Appleyard and Mary Kenny build their miserable careers on the cornerstone of hatred of science? This is the question (although he doesn't quite put it like that) that Prof Dunbar hopes to answer in this thoughtful, highly readable defence of enlightenment and rational inquiry. Incredibly important given the anti-intellectual tenor of the times and the plummeting standards of science teaching in British schools and universities.

The Red King's Dream, or Lewis Carroll in Wonderland, by Jo Elwyn Jones and J Francis Gladstone (Pimlico, £10)

IF THE Alice books are *romans-à-clef*, then this book makes a very good case for providing the full cast list — which turns the books from being either (tick preference) pure surrealist whimsy or the fantasies of a dirty old man into a series of digs at the political and scientific institutions of the day. Apart from the odd twee intrusion ("we were nearing the end of our quest . . ." and so on), this is an enthralling piece of literary detective work. Should be read in conjunction with . . .

Rediscovered Lewis Carroll Puzzles, ed Edward Wakeling (Dover, £4.95)

FORTY-TWO puzzles devised by Carroll, all frighteningly difficult, almost totally impossible in fact, but will help while away an entire rainy spring, let alone a day, and also, in pointing out the inventively tortuous nature of his mind, make the idea of Carroll-as-trickster propounded in the above book all the more plausible.

The lone wolf of Hackney

Nicholas de Jongh

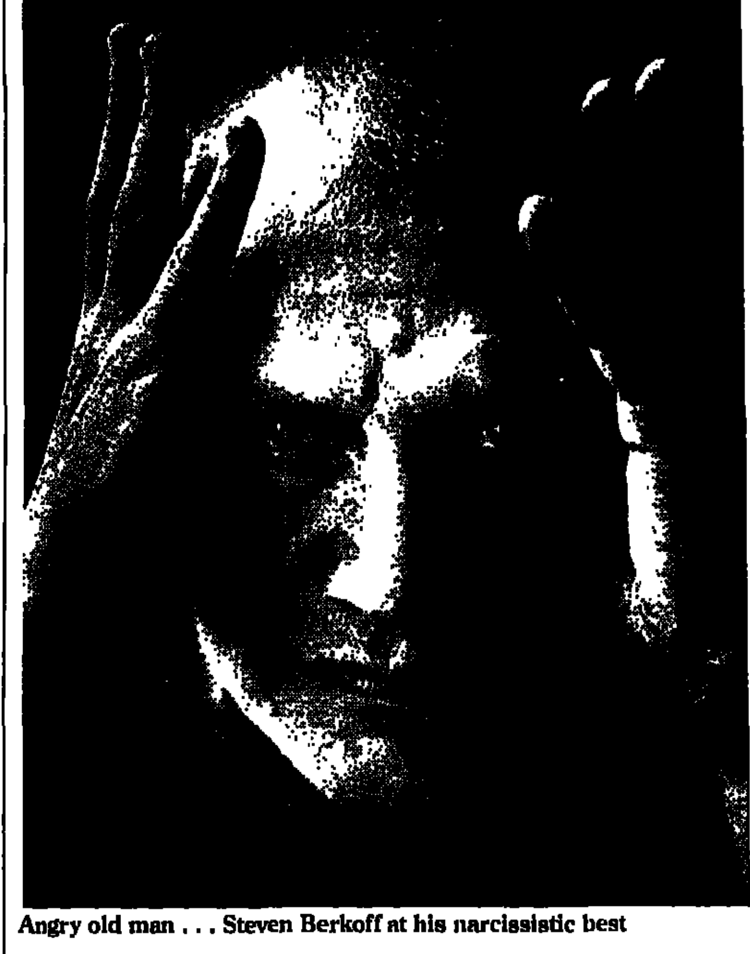
Free Association
by Steven Berkoff
Faber & Faber 410pp £15.99

EVER since Edward VII started dining with actors and bedding actresses, the higher ranks of the theatrical profession have liked to pride themselves upon respectability and decorum. They wear their knighthoods and dameries to the manner born.

The modern wave of 1950s actors, when the working-class likes of Albert Finney, Alan Bates, Terence Stamp, Michael Caine and Tom Courtenay took on the new cinema and theatre, were smoothly absorbed into the show-business establishment. They rocked no boats. They sailed in all the right waters.

To this rule of conformity Steven Berkoff, who belongs to the Finney generation but found fame and influence only in the 1970s, is a delightful exception. His vivid book of memoirs helps explain why. Indeed it casts Berkoff in such a vulnerable and revealing light that I wonder whether he realises how far he has succumbed to the Salome tendency and removed a protective veil too many. None of us looks that brave when our fears and dreams are exposed in confession's glare. And which other heterosexual man would have dared confess that he identified with Tennessee Williams's tragic, man-hungry heroines?

Perhaps Berkoff will not care unduly. Despite his ample insecurities and existential unease, he has a protective cover — a sort of spiritual contraceptive which has stopped him succumbing to any serious neurotic malaise. The revealing moment came when he was 15 and having his hair "styled", with a wave on both sides, at Maxies, a Stoke Newington barber. He looked in the mirror "and like Narcissus fell in love with myself and saw myself destined".



Angry old man . . . Steven Berkoff at his narcissistic best

A Narcissus tendency has been the making — and sometimes the marring — of this unusual actor/director and author. He blows his own trumpet loud and, well, louder — concluding that in a hundred years' time only his own plays will survive. He has never quite lost his adolescent sense of being the working-class outsider in a world inclined to do him down.

His swaggering machismo, and the menacing aspect that he wears like a badge of honour whether on stage, film or in real life, turn out to be all an act. He explains that in the 1980s when he confronted a theatre critic (me — it so happens) and threatened murder, nothing serious was intended. It was just a demonstration of performance-art which left him understandably feeling elated.

By comparison the young Berkoff sounds wimpily ineffectual. He was an East End boy, son of a Jewish tailor who showed no interest in him. He grew up lonely and bullied, collecting stray cats for company, "bonding with teachers and older men". His recollections of growing up in post-war Hackney, the clear bringing back of the days before yesterday, are valuable period snap-shots: girl-crazy Saturday nights up west at the Lyceum perfecting the "cool jive style", listening to Frankie Laine on the juke-box, learning "to strut your gear" at Stamford Hill boy's club.

Boys like Berkoff, he says, set their sights on becoming taxi drivers or the manager of a Cecil Gee menswear shop. So after being sent unjustly to borstal for stealing a bicycle, it was no surprise that he, with no academic qualifications, found himself sentenced to five years' hard, selling gentlemen's clothes. But that streak of narcissism and a dogged acting talent saved him from a lifetime of measuring gentlemen's inside legs. He made it to drama school and soon set out on the repertory trail all starry-eyed.

AT THIS point his prose, which does not always avoid cliché and grammatical chaos, takes on the deadly lustre of Jennifer's Diary: "I remember so clearly this beautiful town and the charming theatre and the sheer wonderful and extraordinary luck to have digs inside the precinct," he gushes, as he totters down memory lane.

There is a solipsistic quality about this over-extended reminiscing. Performers, wives and girlfriends are hardly permitted to emerge as rounded human beings. Even his mother — the only person who inspires him to real tenderness — is sketchily described.

But when writing of the gestation of his own key plays and performances — anthems for disaffected, angry youth — when describing that fusion of mime and choreographed movement, that expressionistic style in the service of texts speaking in tongues ancient and modern, you become freshly aware of how Berkoff at his best has created a novel, personal form of theatre. It's one concerned with aggression, anger and power, rather than bleeding hearts. He may be a lone wolf, but he can pack an interesting snap and a real howl.

Travel's essential futility

Ian Sansom

The Oxford Book of Travel Stories
ed Patricia Craig
Oxford University Press 441pp
£17.99

THOMAS COOK set up a small printing works, the Midland Temperance Press, in 1841, the same year in which he organised his first railway excursion — to a temperance meeting — from Leicester to Loughborough. The press published pamphlets, almanacs and street directories, as well as the campaigning Temperance Messenger and its companions The Children's Temperance Magazine and The Anti-Smoker and Progressive Reformer. It seems fitting that the world's first travel agent should also have been a publisher, since literature is perhaps the most common means of transport to faraway places.

Freud described The Interpretation Of Dreams, for example, as a kind of jaunt — "The whole thing is planned on the model of an imaginary walk. First comes the dark wood of the authorities . . . Then there is a cavernous defile through which I lead my readers . . . and then, all at once, the high ground and the open prospect, and the question: 'Which way do you want to go?' " Books, like planes, trains, and automobiles, bridge distances: they provide quick and easy access to exotic locations, they cut out the legwork, as well as some of the brainwork; they are, essentially, short cuts.

One might be tempted, therefore, to assume that Patricia Craig's Oxford Book Of Travel Stories is the ultimate travelling companion. It is certainly a handy book of literary short cuts, all about crossing boundaries, moving on, and leaving places. But it is not at all the sort of book you'd want to take on holiday with you: not the sort of book you'd want to be reading when your nasal hairs are freezing or when your chest is sore from sun-stroke. When you're abroad you want books about home, you want a Trollope, or an Irvine Welsh, a reminder of life in the Home Counties or on the housing scheme. It is the mass-market middle-brow paperback that is the modern-day vade-mecum, the essential companion for a journey; Craig's beautifully produced anthology is most definitely a book for the bedside table.

As Craig points out, travel stories are not at all the same thing as travel writing, but none the less the narrators of her stories have to face the same terrible truth that confronts any travel writer: you can run but you can't hide; you can pretend to be someone else, but you can't escape yourself; you may be moving through a landscape, but it is still you who's moving through it. Travel writing in all its forms is a horrible reminder that existence isn't elsewhere. Craig's stories suggest that travel is often a futile attempt to escape from oneself.

Certainly, many of the narrators in Craig's choice of stories — ranging from work by Evelyn Waugh to Raymond Carver, from Edith Wharton to Beryl Bainbridge — seem irritated by the sheer irreducibility of the self. Many of the characters feel restless, uncomfortable and unhappy in their own skins — Dickens' narrator in "The Holly-Tree", for example, harrumphs that "I suppose that what I observe in myself must be observed by some other men of similar character in themselves; therefore I am emboldened to mention that, when I travel, I never arrive at a place but I immediately want to go away from it."

And many of them are fed up with their travelling companions: "For the twentieth time," begins Elizabeth Bowen's brilliant "Human Habitation", "as the wet dusk became impenetrably charged with darkness, Jeffries looked distrustfully up at Jameson and challenged him: 'I suppose you are sure we're going the right way?' ".

Travel is, of course, supposed to broaden one's horizons, to dispel prejudices and bigotry — "A man who has climbed the Matterhorn may prefer Derbyshire to Switzerland, but he won't think the Peak is the highest mountain in Europe," wrote Ezra Pound (a man not known for his wide sympathies). But it doesn't, and it never has.

"The Grand Tourist", complained Adam Smith in the 18th century, long before back-packers and package tours, "commonly returns home more conceited, more unprincipled, more dissipated, and more incapable of any serious application, either to study or to business, than he could well have become in so short a time had he lived at home."

There is little evidence in Craig's stories that travelling does you any good at all. Travel, etymologically, is identical with "travail"; they share a common root in the Latin *trepaliare*, meaning "to torture with the *trepalium*, a three-staked instrument of torture". There's no denying it, travel is a pain — you're better off staying at home, reading.

Good night, sweet dreams

A Alvarez

The Enchanted World of Sleep
by Peretz Lavie
Yale UP 270pp £18.95

WHEN President Bush designated the 1990s "the Decade of the Brain" he was putting his seal of approval on the scientific community's latest great project, to solve the enigma of consciousness. It is a problem that has been around at least since Plato, but neuroscientists believe they now know so much about the brain and how it works that they may be close to an answer.

The brain has been called "the most complicated material object in the known universe". It contains as many neurons as there are stars in the Milky Way — about 100 billion of them. Every neuron is unique, generates its own energy, produces its own signals and communicates with other neurons through chemicals, called neurotransmitters. There are 10 billion neurons in the cerebral cortex alone and each communicates simultaneously with at least 10,000 of its neighbours, generating between 100 and 300 messages a second. This unimaginable neuronal chatter goes on unceasingly, day and night.

Repeat, night. Until about 40 years ago, people believed the brain shut down during sleep. Scientists now know that neuronal activity falls off by a mere 5 to 10 per cent, even in deepest sleep. The body, however, is switched off; the skeletal muscles are paralysed and nothing moves except the eyeballs, which swivel and rotate behind their closed lids. So instead of getting up and moving around as his brain tells him to, the sleeper dreams.

Before the discovery of rapid eye movement sleep, in 1953, sleep research was a minor branch of physiology. It is now a full-blown science in its own right. Like sex, sleep is a universal preoccupation and people often find it hard to get right. Between the chronic ends of the scale — narcolepsy and insomnia, too much and too little — there are endless variations in sleep disorders and most of us have experienced some of them: jet lag makes you sleepy at the wrong times, depression and booze put you to sleep quickly, then wake you up too soon. Those who suffer worst from them often end up in sleep laboratories.



ILLUSTRATION: ANN MORROW

The primary purpose of a sleep laboratory is to diagnose a sleep disorder, not to cure it. The patient's head is wired up with electric leads which plug into a panel behind the bed and connect to a polygraph in the observation room next door. The electrodes measure electrical activity in the brain's cortex, eye movements and muscle activity while the patient sleeps, and the polygraph records them all on a giant stretch of paper that unrolls steadily throughout the night.

A good night's sleep seems unlikely with a Medusa's nest of wires fixed to your head, an infra-red camera watching you and a microphone recording every snore. Yet when I tried it I slept like a baby.

The Enchanted World Of Sleep is a summary of the current state of play in sleep research. Peretz Lavie, head of the sleep laboratory at the Technion-Israel Institute in Israel knows the field as well as anyone and covers it scrupulously. He describes the intricate rhythms of sleep and its physiology, how the body's clock is regulated by light and its temperature by a thermostat in the brain. He writes about the effect of trauma (the Holocaust and Scud missile attacks) on sleep and dreams, the biological necessity of REM sleep, and how the blind dream (noises and contact instead of scenes). He is also fascinating on non-human sleep: fish and insects have quiescent periods that look like sleep; birds sleep with one eye open or in short bursts, for fear of predators and dolphins swim in circles with one half of their brain awake, the other asleep.

The mystery of sleep, the emotional intricacy of dreams and the concept of mind interest Lavie hardly at all. But he is wonderfully well-informed about sleep disorders — how to diagnose them and how to cope with them — and his clear, authoritative book is an excellent introduction to a complex subject.

Night: An Exploration of Night Life, Night Language, Sleep and Dreams by A Alvarez is published by Vintage (£7.99)

Decent tales from Hollywood

Simon Hattenstone

With Nails
The Film Diaries of Richard E Grant
Picador 310pp £16.99

PEOPLE tend to say Richard E Grant made a perfect Withnail, not that he gave a great performance as the louche, dissipated actor. The assumption seems to be that director Bruce Robinson had simply stood a camera in front of real life and let it roll.

Since then, Grant has been given many roles on the strength of this film — loved you as Withnail, please star in my movie. For a few years he lost currency, but today has re-established himself. The thirty-somethings are nostalgic for Withnail — hence the film's recent re-release 10 years on — and, more significantly, after flirting with character acting (Henry And June) and action movies (the disastrous Hudson Hawk) he is back doing what he does best — playing OTT, manic creatives in Robert Altman's The Player and Prêt à Porter, and Dennis Potter's Karaoke. It's a caricature he has created for himself.

Yet despite Gary Oldman's nickname for him, Outrageous, Grant emerges from his diaries as Mr Sensible: he becomes ill when he tries to smoke, vomits when he tries to drink and blubs when separated from wife and child.

Grant acknowledges the importance of Withnail And I — hence the title. But one would expect a book called With Nails to be spikier. Grant is no Kenneth Anger or Julia Phillips. As an actor he is insufficiently distinguished to be of interest, and as a muck-racker he is insufficiently forthcoming to titillate.

Grant's sense of decency verges on the prudish. He talks of actors who muff their lines, then apologises for providing no names. His lawyer must be pleased with such discretion, but it frustrates the reader.

The diaries also need a thorough editing. Grant writes in after-dinner speech mode. His sentences are packed with heightened *italics* and wacky CAPITAL LETTERS and exclamation marks to really hit the high notes!!! Tiresome.

Yet when he controls himself the diaries come to life. Grant provides an insight into the working methods of three of the greatest contemporary film directors: Altman's relaxed, easy chaos; Coppola's generous but fraught chaos; and the taciturn, composed industry of Scorsese ("I often get the sense that the whole film is a private affair conducted in Marty's head, with the filming a necessary activity but nothing like as rewarding for him as the editing process that follows"). His description of the death of his first child after half an hour's life is gutting. (She is warm but dead . . . Ten toes, ten fingers. Eyes, mouth, all. Broken, no breath.").

At one point he prints the love letter he sent to Barbra Streisand as a child. Having heard she was suffering from exhaustion, he offers her respite in his parents' beautiful Swaziland home.

He waits for days, weeks, years, but never hears back. Finally Grant meets her at a party. He is so nervily garbled that she asks him if he's stoned. Eventually, he manages 20 minutes of conversation. When he gets home he replays the night "Can't quite believe she even told me about her eating habits in response to my asking how she managed to stay the same shape. Oi vey, Swaz. Some night."

Crime Lucretia Stewart

The Two-Bear Mambo by Joe R Lansdale (Gollancz Originals, £8.99)

DAVID LYNCH has apparently bought the film rights to Mucho Mo-jo, Joe Lansdale's previous novel featuring the crowd-pleasing combination of Hap Collins, white and straight, and Leonard Pine, black and gay; there is an over-the-top gothic quality to Lansdale's work that you could see would appeal to the maker of Wild At Heart, Carl Hiassen meets James Lee Burke time (Hiassen really does have a lot to answer for). But The Two-Bear Mambo is so much fun that the initial irritation triggered by its politically correct casting rapidly fades. Hap and Leonard set off on a kind of "road-movie" trip in search of Florida Grange, Hap's gorgeous former lover, and find themselves in serious redneck country where the Ku Klux Klan call the shots. Heavy, man.

Evil Acts by Lesley Grant-Adamson (Hodder & Stoughton, £16.99)

GRACE is delighted with her smart North London house but her pleasure soon turns to horror when she discovers that her new home was previously owned by a serial killer, *à la* Dennis Nilsen, whose spirit seems to be haunting the place. Grace's boyfriend unsurprisingly doesn't feel at home and moves out just days after moving in. The idea behind Evil Acts is a good one, but Grant-Adamson fails to bring it off and the book soon degenerates into fanciful Grand Guignol and an unconvincing and unsatisfying denouement.

Killing Critics by Carol O'Connell (Hutchinson, £15.99)

AFTER an unsteady beginning, Killing Critics gathers pace, largely sustained by the unforgettable personality of its heroine, the beautiful but bizarre Detective Sergeant Kathy Mallory, a policewoman with a heart of stone and the looks of a super-model. The setting is the New York art scene where the murder victims are arranged as works of art. Performance art with a twist. There is a particularly funny manic depressive art critic who sets up camp on the roof of Bloomingdale's and berates fashion victims through a loud-hailer ("You — in the-too-mauve-for-words pantsuit", and so on). Witty, unusual and memorable.

Find My Way Home by Mark Timlin (Gollancz, £15.99)

FROM the East End school of brutal realism. After Harry Stonehouse's body turns up in pieces all over London, his widow hires her ex-lover, dodgy ex-copper Nick Sharman, to find out what her late husband was doing during the year he went missing. Sharman teams up with the improbably named Jack Robber, another ex-copper, and lots of bloody fireworks ensue.

Rare bird of the mountains

Mark Cocker

A *LOOSE* translation of the name, satyr tragopan, might be "horned god of the woods", and for once I feel the early naturalists found a title to match the creature itself. It's a type of pheasant, but any attempt to describe the bird in terms of the hand-reared fowl that blunder daily into British car windscreens is like trying to compare an Apache warrior to a balding, overweight businessman.

Imagine a bird the size of a really big cockerel with an electric blue face, black feather horns that he can erect when excited, and a body plumage of deep blood red. Overlaying this magical colour are hundreds of white ocelli, each encircled by a crisp black margin and so bright they seem almost luminous.

Most western ornithologists agree that it's the ultimate species on any birdwatching trip to the Nepalese Himalayas. These mountains comprise most of the tragopan's world distribution, although the Nepalese bird atlas shows that the species has been seen in just 10 of the 81 tetrads covering the country. Moreover, its highly restricted range on paper only hints at the exertions involved in finding it on the ground.

Tragopans are mainly recorded between 8,500 and 12,500 feet and are creatures of dense oak and rhododendron forest with thickets of bamboo. To add spice to the challenge they favour extremely steep slopes. My previous quest lasted about a fortnight in an area sandwiched between the mountains of Annapurna and Dhaulagiri.

Every morning we would gaze up at these five-mile-high giants looming on either side of the Kali Gandaki valley, the deepest in the world, and reflect on how they seemed the perfect setting for the ultimate Himalayan bird.

Each day then resolved into long exhausting ascents, frequent halts as our lungs began to panic in the thin mountain air, followed by jaded descents during mid-afternoon. I came to understand why so few ornithologists have made the effort to see more than a handful of tragopans, and why some have settled for the sight of a female, a subtle blend of grey and brown sprinkled with dull spots.

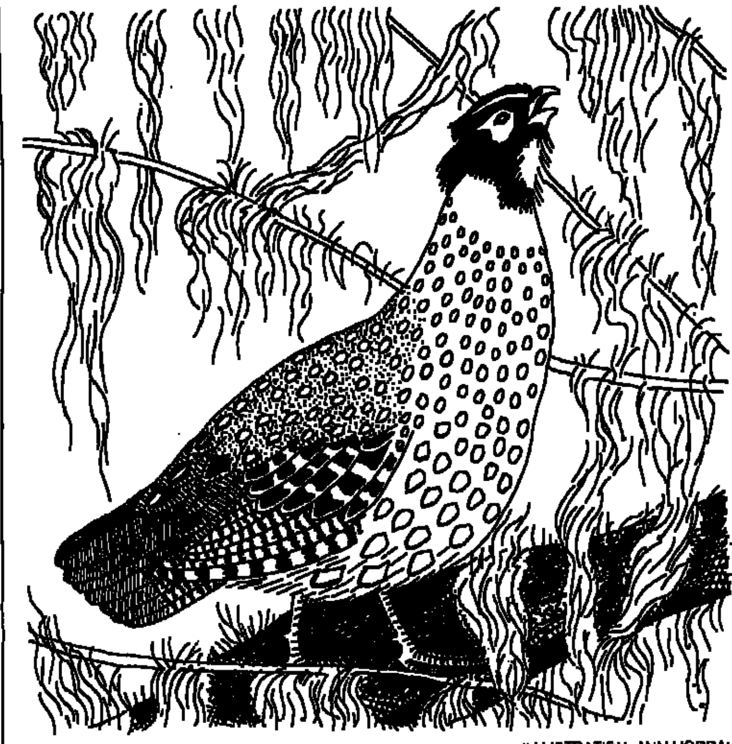


ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

IT IS probably because of these fruitless memories that it seemed incredible, during a recent visit to the Himalayas, that I could be listening to this mythic creature just a stone's throw away through the forest. So typical of the bird, the male's dawn call is an unearthly and un-avian wail, usually transliterated as "W-a-a-a-a". Both this and its other main call — a repeated "Ka-ka-ka-ka-ka-ka-ka" — have a quite definite mocking quality. We crept towards the direction of these sounds until it was so close it seemed equally incredible that we still couldn't actually see it.

There is one further dimension to my obsession with tragopans, which concerns the person who accompanied me 13 years ago during my previous search. After I had left Nepal he made a final mountain trek and reached a place called Tharepati in the Langtang National Park, to the north of the capital, Kathmandu. Ignoring the strains of the climb to this mist-shrouded spot, he went out in search of the tragopans he could hear calling, and has never been seen since.

Suddenly, almost casually, our tragopan wandered into view. For one, perhaps two seconds I watched it as it descended the tree from which it had been calling. I could make out its large, full-chested shape, the dark face and brilliant red plumage.

The circumstances of my friend's disappearance made this individual bird one of the most beautiful and haunting I have seen in my life.

Chess Leonard Barden

UNFASHION is becoming more fashionable when grandmasters decide how to combat their opponents' pre-game homework.

That's because the current sophisticated databases enable players to survey their rivals' entire careers the morning before a game and during their search for an opening weakness.

However, this in-depth preparation can be neatly sidestepped, sometimes to great psychological effect, if you produce a variation you have never played before and that, ideally, had its heyday before the mids-sixties, when technical journals and databases began to collect information on all games played in serious international competitions.

Miguel Illescas — who tied first at Madrid last month, the best result of his career — was up against Alex Morozevich, a gifted Russian teenager heading for the top of the world. The Spanish No 1 hit upon an unpretentious but solid system that used to be a favourite of the US champion Reshevsky in the mid-fifties, just before the database era.

It did the trick: Morozevich, who loves to attack, ignored or just didn't know the simple equalising plan that put the Reshevsky system out of business. Instead, he preferred to launch a number of reckless pawn advances that exposed his own king.

Illescas-Morozevich, Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0 5 Nge2 5 Nf3 is the main line. **d5 6 a3 Bd6?** Be7 is an improvement, but better still is Bxc3+ 7 Nxc3 c5 followed by cxd4 and dxc4 leaving White an isolated d4 pawn — which discouraged 5 Nge2 in the fifties.

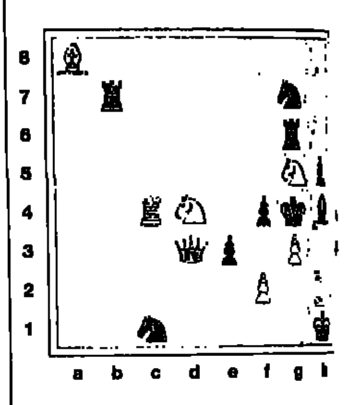
7 c5! Be7 8 b4 c6 9 Ng3 b6 10 Bd2 bxc5 11 bxc5 e5 So that if 12 dxe5 Nfd7. **12 Be2 g6?** Too many pawn moves with Black's army still at base. Instead 12 exd4 13 exd4 Ne8-c7-e6 and Bf6 creates counterplay against d4.

13 0-0 h5? 14 dxe5 Ng4 15 Bxg4 Bxg4 16 f3 Bd7 17 f4 Qc8 18 e4 d4 19 f5! An instinctive sacrifice. Black is grovelling on the back rows, while White has both a pawn phalanx and pieces available for attack. **dxc3 20 Bxc3 Na6 21 Nxh5! Nxe5** If gxh5 22 Qxh5 threatens f6,e6,or Rf3-g3.

22 Nf6+ Bxf6 23 exf6 Bxf5? Despair: 23 . . . Nxe4 (24 Qc1 g5) is a better practical chance.

24 exf5 Ne4 25 Qe1 g5 26 Qd1! The third piece sacrifice, ensuring that the Q reaches the h file. **Nxc3 27 Qh5 Ne4 28 Qh6 Nxf6 29 Qxg5+ Kh7 30 Rf3! Resigns.** If 30 Qxf6 Qd8 Black could still fight on, but now Rh3+ is decisive.

No 2425



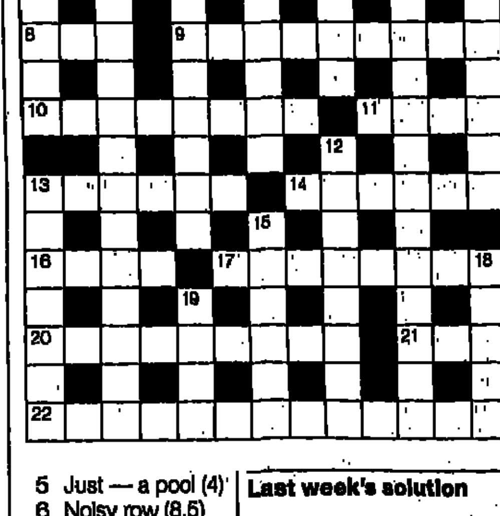
White mates in two moves against any defence.

You can enter the first stage of the annual British Solving Championship by sending White's first move to BCPS, 9 Roydfield Drive, Waterthorpe, Sheffield S19 6ND, together with an SAE and a money order for £3 payable to BCPS. You will be sent a more difficult round of postal problems. Please mark your solution "Guardian".

The closing date is July 31. Also only British residents are eligible. The championship final in February 1997 has a £200 first prize and qualifies for the 1997 World Solving Championship.

No 2424: 1 Rb2! e2 2 Nh6 and 2 . . . Kd1 3 Ng4 e1Q 4 Nf2+ Kd2 5 Nd3+ or 2 . . . Kf1 3 Ng4 e1Q 4 Nh2+ Kg1 5 Nf3+ wins.

Quick crossword no. 318



Across

1 Insincere pledges (5,8)
8 Collection — ready — determined — to go down (3)
9 Promise — to bury someone? (9)
10 God of sleep (8)
11 Expectant (4)
13 Counting frame (6)
14 Large wasp (6)
16 Den (4)
17 Scented (8)
20 Sleeveless upper garment (9)
21 Secure — a dead-heat (3)
22 Recognised — famous! (13)

Down

1 Derby racecourse (5)
2 Male head of family (13)
3 Young (8)
4 Radioactive element (6)
5 Just — a pool (4)
6 Noisy row (8,5)
7 Quickness of the hand (7)
12 Paper thrown on festive occasions (8)
13 Permitted (7)
15 Appertain (6)
18 Fear (5)
19 Needle-case (4)

Last week's solution

SNATCH SPLEEN
H C L A X E
RATIO INTRUDE
I R U M O L D
FREEDOM HOTEL
T S U U E
SAFETYPIN
C A A E P
LEMON BOERWAR
E I T L A L O
RUMMAGE GIANT
I I F L I O
COCKLE DEADEN

Bridge Zia Mahmood

THE Crockford's Cup, the premier team event in England, was won in a dramatic finish by Derek Patterson, Willie Whittaker, Pete Law and Pat Collins.

With a round to go, the all-conquering Hackett team appeared to have the event sewn up, but could only draw their final match, while Patterson managed a maximum victory to snatch the cup by a single point.

The most dramatic deal of the whole weekend emphasised Bob Hamman's advice that you should never be depressed by what may appear to be a terrible result. East-West game, dealer East:

North
♠ 4
♥ KJ10962
♦ Q10973
♣ 4

West
♠ Q108
♥ A54
♦ 82
♣ K10875

East
♠ AK7652
♥ Q873
♦ None
♣ AQ9

South
♠ J93
♥ None
♦ AKJ654
♣ J632

The bidding at one table was:

South	West	North	East
			1♠
3♦[1]	3♠	4♥[2]	4♠
Dble (!)	No	5♦	No
No	No		

1 Allegedly an intermediate jump overcall, but it looks more like a weak jump.
2 Expecting to be able to support diamonds on the next round, and showing his second suit to help South judge the situation.

South's double of four spades was either one of the most inspired bluffs of the century or a piece of complete lunacy. He had no reason to expect that his double would not end the auction, and no reason to expect that he could beat seven spades, let alone four. The effect was that when North removed to five diamonds, neither East nor West felt able to bid any more, and South made five diamonds in comfort.

How would you feel as East-West, having conceded 400 points when you had a cold slam in spades for the taking?

Not to worry. At the other table the bidding was:

South	West	North	East
			1♠
3♦	3♠	4♥	4♠
No	No	5♦	5♠
No	No	6♦	Dble
No	No	No	

This time three diamonds really was a weak jump overcall. As at the other table, North showed his second suit, then sacrificed in six diamonds over the enemy's five spades. He was prepared to go to seven diamonds over six spades if need be (achieving the par result of 300 to East-West in the process) but each opponent feared that there might be too many losers in hearts for the slam to succeed.

West, on lead to six diamonds doubled, produced one of the most expensive wrong cards in history — the ace of hearts! South ruffed, drew trumps, and established dummy's heart suit for four discards from his hand. Six diamonds doubled bid and made came to 1,090, and the pair from the other room, who were worried about their minus 400, had the pleasure of discovering that it was worth 11 IMPs to their side.

Football Euro 96

Yellow 30 – Reds 2 ... it's also a game of cards

Richard Williams

AFTER England had opened Euro 96 last Saturday with the traditional anticlimax against the modest opposition provided by Switzerland, other nations took over on Sunday to provide a clearer view of the kind of football to come — as well as a clear indication of a refereeing clampdown, expressed in 30 yellow cards and two sendings-off in the first four matches.

Two further 1-1 draws, between Spain and Bulgaria at Elland Road and Denmark and Portugal at Hillsborough, resembled the Wembley affair only in their scorelines, while the third match, at Old Trafford, resulted in an emphatic 2-0 win for the tournament favourites Germany over the Czech Republic.

Playing in the same sultry conditions that had mysteriously drained the stamina from English legs after barely an hour's play the previous day, the Spaniards and the Bulgarians each had a man sent off with just under 20 minutes to go. Yet, even down to 10 men, both sides kept running right to the end of a contest that was physically and mentally far more competitive.

The perpetually scowling Hristo Stoichkov opened the scoring for Bulgaria with a penalty in the 65th minute, shortly after an offside flag had mistakenly denied him the reward for a wonderful volley. Alfonso equalised for Spain, deflecting Sergi's low shot.

At Old Trafford, Germany succeeded where England had failed in the task of dismissing modest opposition, over-running the Czech Republic in the cooler conditions of late afternoon. First-half goals by Christian Ziege and Andreas Möller turned the match after an indifferent opening quarter by the favourites, who were without the suspended Jürgen Klinsmann. During the match itself they lost Jürgen Kohler, their most experienced defender, who is going home for an operation to repair torn ligaments and will miss the rest of the tournament.

Take that! Alan Shearer blasts his way out of a long, dark tunnel as he puts England into the lead with his first international goal for 21 months PHOTOGRAPH: ADY KERRY

Ten players, six of them German, received yellow cards from the English referee David Elleray during a hard fought but unattractive match, compared with two reds and seven yellows at Elland Road and five yellows at Wembley. Petar Hubchev, the Bulgarian centre-back, and Juan Antonio Pizzi, the Spanish forward, were the two men sent off — the first in 12 years — and will miss their teams' next matches.

Stoichkov was highly critical of the referee, Piero Ceccarini of Italy. "The man who most erred was the referee. You can't send off two important players like that," he said. "Neither had a prior caution. I don't know what Uefa are after."

The impression of a crackdown was reinforced by eight yellow cards in a relatively mild-mannered encounter on Sunday at Hillsborough, where Denmark were beginning their defence of the trophy. Outstanding saves by Peter Schmeichel kept the holders in the game after Ricardo Sa Pinto had equalised Brian Laudrup's goal in a game memorable for Portugal's fluent improvisation.

England's complaints against the refereeing of their match by Manuel Diez Vega of Spain were resumed on Sunday when Paul Ince joined Terry Venables in publicly disputing the hand-ball decision against Stuart Pearce that gave Switzerland their equalising penalty. But the real questions were being asked about how the coach could have spent two years preparing a team which turned out to be lacking even the stamina necessary to carry it through a single match against one of the tournament's poorer sides. It was difficult to believe that the lengthy flights and over-indulgences of the recent Far East trip had not contributed to the team's collapse in the final third of the game.

Even at the start of the match, in the midst of a crowd of 76,000, rows of empty £100 seats in the Olympic Gallery testified to a misjudgment that could be put down to the organisers' greed. More worrying were the attendances at Sunday's games: 24,000 at Elland Road, 37,000 at Old Trafford and 35,000 at Hillsborough, respectively 15,000, 13,000 and 5,000 below capacity.

The most elevated moment of last Saturday's touchingly homespun opening ceremony, which displayed much of the glamour of an English primary schools' country dancing exhibition of the early 1950s, came with the appearance on the pitch of 11 old England players, led by Sir Stanley Matthews, and the announcement over the public address system of the presence of Pele. The immortal Brazilian was welcomed with a warmth that provided a vivid reminder of what had drawn us there in the first place: the shared love of a game that can deliver skill and beauty enough to transcend greed or pageantry or mere patriotism.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Sky's the limit for live soccer on TV

THE BIGGEST battle for television sports rights ever fought in Britain was won by Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB last week when it secured the rights to show live Premiership football with a £670 million four-year deal. Its present five-year contract expires at the end of the next season.

Sky beat off tough competition from the MAI group, which offered £1.6 billion for a 10-year agreement, and a bid worth £650 million over four years by the Carlton-Mirror group.

The BBC also fought off ITV to win the highlight rights for £73 million, almost tripling what the corporation paid in 1992. The contract safeguards the future of Match of the Day, its 32-year-old flagship soccer programme.

Sky's deal dwarfs the £200 million it paid to win the rights from ITV in 1992. It also marks a huge increase from the £2.5 million a year top-flight football fetched 10 years ago. Top live soccer is worth £185 million per year now.

Meanwhile the Rugby Football Union announced on Monday that it had signed an £87.5 million deal with BSkyB. The exclusive England contract stretches over five years and will cover all internationals. It was attacked by rugby officials from Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

BRITAIN'S Naseem Hamed retained his WBO featherweight crown for the second time with a second-round win over Daniel Alicia of Puerto Rico in Newcastle upon Tyne. Hamed was knocked down for the first time in his career, but quickly bounced back against his previously unbeaten opponent. He turned on the power, flooring Alicia twice, and the referee called a halt with 14 seconds left in the second round.

COLIN McRAE, reigning world rallying champion, became the first Briton to win the Acropolis Rally in Greece since 1968 after surviving a nail-biting drama. He was nearly undone in the penultimate stage when his Subaru developed a transmission problem, but the mechanics fixed it with just three seconds to spare. The Scot finished 50 seconds ahead of Tommi Makinen of Finland, who had troubles of his own when the rocky surface shredded the tyres of his Mitsubishi.

THE gulf between Rugby Union at the top level in the northern and southern hemispheres was highlighted once again when Australia cantered to a 56-25 victory over Wales in Brisbane. The Wallabies' technique and speed of foot and hand left the visitors struggling for most of the match.

MICHAEL DOOHAN boosted his chances of retaining the 500cc motor-cycling world title when he won the French Grand Prix in Le Castellet on Sunday. It was his third GP win in a row and fifth this season. The Australian led home two other Honda riders, Spaniards Alex Criville and Alberto Puig.

SHAAMIT won the Epsom Derby by one and a quarter lengths on his seasonal debut. The colt, trained by Willie Haggas, son-in-law of Lester Piggott, was having only the third race of his career but he swept into the lead two furlongs from home under Michael Hills. They looked set for an easy win until the favourite, Dushyantor, started to fly home for Pat Eddery. But Shaamit held on in a desperate finish with Shantou back in third place.

SUPPORTERS of Sparta Prague have been dealt a double whammy. Having finished a wretched fourth this season after dominating the domestic league for 10 years, the Czech club have been sold to a company from neighbouring Slovakia.

PHILIP McCALLEN became the first rider in Isle of Man TT history to win four races in a week when he dominated both the Production and Senior events as the festival ended last Friday, winning the six-lap blue-riband race by 72 seconds from the veteran TT rider Joey Dunlop.

England 1 Switzerland 1

England run out of steam

David Lacey at Wembley

ENGLAND began the European Championship with a 1-1 draw against Switzerland here on Saturday.

The most worrying aspect of England's performance was not so much the opportunity for victory that was squandered after Alan Shearer had ended his international fast with an outstanding goal, but the way the side fell away so badly after half-time.

Terry Venables blamed the humidity. On the freshest afternoon of the week he must have been wearing the wrong suit. But that England tired rapidly in the second half was undeniable, and serious questions are bound to be renewed about preparations that involved flying the players halfway round the world only days before the tournament.

Too many players were way below their best last Saturday. Ince was wandering once more, Sheringham looked out of his depth, and taking off McManaman instead of Anderton was illogical. Even if the defence had been queuing up on McManaman's right foot, once he had gone the 19-year-old Vogel moved forward and might have won Switzerland the game.

But for the grace of Grassi, who five minutes before half-time hit the underside of the bar from close range after Türkyilmaz had outwitted Pearce, and some late heroics from Seaman, Switzerland probably would have won it.

At least England began the tournament with a goal of quality after 22 minutes. As the Swiss defence moved up, Shearer exchanged passes with Ince before bursting clear.

Jeanneret, arm raised in vain, had kept Shearer onside and, though the Blackburn striker's shot grazed the inside of the post, its power still bulged both the net and English optimism.

The penalty through which Türkyilmaz brought the scores level was somewhat harsh but was an indirect consequence of England defending too deeply. Southgate was back-pedalling as he met Henchoz's high ball and his weak header dropped limply to Grassi.

Grassi tried to hook the ball over Pearce and struck a protective arm, the referee gave the penalty, and Türkyilmaz sent Seaman the wrong way. England could complain about the decision, but not the result.

In the other Group A match, Scotland held Holland to a 0-0 draw at Villa Park on Monday raising the stakes for the England v Scotland clash on June 15.

